Collaboration Is Not Enough:
Virtuous Cycles of Reform in Transportation Policy

Margaret Weir, Jane Rongerude and
Christopher K. Ansell
University of California, Berkeley
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Over the past two decades, a burgeoning literature has touted the promise of regional collaboration to address a wide range of issues. This article challenges the premise that horizontal collaboration alone can empower regional decision-making venues. By analyzing efforts to create regional venues for transportation policy making in Chicago and Los Angeles, the authors show that vertical power is essential to building regional capacities. Only by exercising power at multiple levels of the political system can local reformers launch a virtuous cycle of reform that begins to build enduring regional capacities.

Keywords: *regionalism; networks; transportation*

Although it is rarely grouped together with other types of social policy, transportation policy has effects on individual welfare that rival those of almost any other domain of domestic policy. By influencing demographic patterns, job access, and income, transportation decisions exert a profound impact on the living conditions and life chances of Americans. For more than half a century, critics have pointed to the baleful effects of transportation policy on American life. In 1960, for example, with the interstate highway program operating at full bore, future Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan sharply criticized the outsized promises of the highway builders. Instead of bringing "city and country closer together . . . [making] us one country and a united people," Moynihan (1960) warned that the unplanned

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approach to highway building would create "chaos in concrete." Its effects would be particularly harmful for cities where "plans have been thrown together and the bulldozers set to work" (p. 19). He also predicted that without metropolitan planning to guide transportation decisions, highway builders would let "suburbs eat endlessly into the countryside" and destroy cities with ill-conceived highway projects.

Three decades later, as a Senate subcommittee chair, Moynihan re-entered the same debate, spearheading the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), legislation that aimed to reverse the harmful impact of transportation on cities. Hailed as a revolution in transportation policy making, the law provided a combination of institutional reform and new requirements for participation, which together, it was hoped, would make transportation policy responsive to the needs of cities. ISTEA's central institutional reform carved out a space for regional decision making by enhancing the power of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), regional entities that had existed since the 1960s but which exercised little authority. By granting MPOs new power over spending, reformers hoped to shift authority away from state highway departments, where urban transportation needs typically received short shrift (Gage and McDowell 1995).

The ISTEA legislation also promised broader participation, requiring "early and continuous" public involvement in MPO deliberations. Additional provisions stipulated that MPOs and state transportation agencies make special outreach efforts to traditionally underserved populations (Sanchez, Stolz, and Ma 2003). By mandating public participation in the planning process, the legislation aimed to elevate the concerns of ordinary consumers and rein in the powerful interests that profited from highway construction and expansive development. Reformers hoped the revamped institutional setting for decision making and the addition of new voices would alter the existing policy bias that favored outward development at the expense of cities and would prod policy makers to consider the broader social and economic impacts of transportation.

As a mechanism for sparking new activity around transportation, the law was a striking success. As this article shows, the provisions for opening participation provoked new debates in the once largely closed arena of transportation policy making. Emergent policy networks brought together bicycle advocates, environmentalists, advocates for improving access for the elderly and low-income people, and supporters of improved public transit. Regional convenings and planning processes elicited fresh visions of metropolitan areas and solicited input that went well beyond the usual narrow coalition of highway builders, real estate interests, and developers.

As an instrument for altering policy, however, the law fell short. Despite the hopes that the initial legislation roused and the passage of two subsequent reauthorizations in 1998 and 2005 reinforcing and extending the novel thrust of the 1991 law, most assessments concur in labeling the policy impact of transportation reform disappointing. In a wide-ranging evaluation of the law's impact, Katz, Puentes, and Bernstein (2005), for example, charged that implementation of federal transportation statutes had been "seriously flawed—and in basic ways unresponsive to metropolitan needs." In their view, one of the central problems was that even though "ISTEA and TEA-21 were designed to move transportation decision making out of the back rooms and board rooms of the highway establishment, many state DOTs still wield considerable formal and informal power, retaining authority over substantial state transportation funds" (p. 21).

How can the disappointing assessments of the legislation be reconciled with the range of new activity that it inspired? This article examines that question by comparing the fate of transportation reform in the Los Angeles and Chicago regions since the passage of ISTEA in 1991. In both regions, we show, the transportation field gained new actors and regional networks dedicated to changing the processes and outcomes of policy making in transportation. However, in Los Angeles, the network that emerged around regional transportation reform began to peter out after a decade of activism. In Chicago, by contrast, key groups in the network became stronger as they were bolstered by newly created but well-connected organizations.

The divergence in reform trajectories, we argue, is due to the greater centralization of the Chicago reform network and the participation of powerful actors in it. These features of Chicago's network laid the groundwork for a virtuous cycle between expanded participation and institutional reform of the MPO, which was essential for strengthening regional governance capacities. In Los Angeles, the absence of powerful actors generated a new regional conversation about transportation but failed to promote reform of the MPO. Lacking a virtuous cycle between participation and institutional development, the impetus for participating in regional venues withered and Los Angeles's reform network began to atrophy.

We develop this argument in five parts. The first section examines the literature on policy feedbacks and participation, showing how the multi-tiered context of decision making creates challenges for launching a virtuous cycle of reform between participation of new constituencies and institutional reform. The second section presents the methods and rationale for case selection. The next two sections document the initial successes in opening participation in both regions as new groups entered the transportation

arena and began to coalesce into reform networks. The final section shows how the differences in the structure of the regional networks and their ability to promote institutional change caused the trajectory of reform to diverge in the two regions.

Policy Feedbacks, Collaboration, and the Development of Regional Governance Capacities

Scholars from diverse theoretical traditions have sought to assess the ways that policy design influences participation and policy outcomes. One strand of historical institutionalist theory argues that new policies can create reinforcing cycles in which new policies give rise to constituencies whose support sustains the policy in the future and prevents opponents from rolling it back. Other approaches examine how policy can alter the terms on which different groups engage with one another around policy goals. Arguments about collaboration and the networked polity, for example, highlight possibilities for mutually beneficial engagement in which policy brings actors together to collaborate on problem solving. A closer look at the assumptions in these literatures reveals that neither pays adequate attention to the way a multi-tiered political context influences the dynamics of constituency formation, institutional change, and policy development.

Policy Feedbacks

The idea that policy can change politics has a long pedigree in the study of American politics, from E. E. Schattschneider's (1983) analysis of the impact of policy reform on tax politics to Theodore Lowi's (1964) depiction of three discrete policy arenas that create distinct styles of politics. Recently, scholars have posed the question more broadly as one of "policy feedbacks" (Pierson 1993; Campbell 2005; Schneider and Ingram 1997). Typically drawing on analyses of social welfare policies, this work shows how specific features of policy design shape constituencies, reframe future perceptions about the purpose of the policy, and help recast interests in ways that build supportive coalitions. In this perspective, policy not only creates new constituencies but also can set the terms on which groups interact, giving some groups a leg up and making some kinds of outcomes more possible and others less likely. Moreover, the virtuous linkage between a policy and its beneficiaries alters politics in enduring ways. Policies can strengthen groups, which in turn use their power to defend and strengthen the policy. At their

tightest, these linkages create "lock-in" in which even widespread opposition may not be able to dislodge a policy (Pierson 1993). The intertwined impact of policy on constituency formation, ideas about policy, and coalition formation creates a distinctive political landscape and shapes the terms in which future public problems are perceived and addressed.

Perhaps because much of this literature focuses on national programs, it rarely considers how the operation of the federal system affects the impact of policy on politics. The multi-tiered configuration of federal polities brings many additional actors into the process of policy implementation. For example, Mara Sidney's (2003) study of community reinvestment and fair housing policies shows that cross-scale policies require analyzing how distinctive local conditions mediate the influence of national policy on politics; she also highlights the role of nonprofit organizations as critical intermediaries in determining the local impact of policy. In an era of devolution, she notes, much of local implementation is carried out by advocacy organizations, not local governments. In policies that work across levels of government, it is essential to analyze such distinctive local political conditions as well as the mobilizing capacities of the local organized groups in whose hands implementation rests (Mollenkopf 1983; Sellers 2002).

Regional Collaboration and Networked Governance

A second literature, examining regional collaboration and networked governance, also offers insights into the impact of transportation reform legislation. This work argues that the active engagement of society can be an effective means for achieving public goals by linking functionally distinct groups in new horizontal networks (Ansell 2000). Within this context, it becomes more possible for diverging interests to identify points of commonality and to craft policy approaches of mutual benefit. Theories about collaboration and networked governance highlight the need for brokers, such as nongovernmental organized intermediaries, to connect diverse stakeholders to one other and to the state (Guthrie and McQuarrie 2005).

In the transportation arena, certain features of networked governance clearly took shape after the reform legislation of the 1990s. In line with the depiction of networked governance, organized intermediaries sought to take advantage of the new possibilities for horizontal networking created by the legislation. Acting as network brokers, newly created nonprofit organizations fostered connections across diverse groups and promoted new ways of thinking about transportation's role in the metropolitan area. These brokers sought actively to expand the network by showing different groups

how transportation affected their interests. In this way, groups with little history of prior cooperation forged new connections through intermediaries.

Despite these encouraging signs, the new regional transportation networks did not lead the way to collaborative governance because they never gained the power to make authoritative decisions. According to the concept of networked governance by Ansell (2000), the state's role is to "empower stakeholders and facilitate cooperation among them" (p. 303). When the state fails to perform this role, policy networks may emerge, but there is no mechanism to link their ideas to outcomes.

The problem with networked governance for analyzing transportation reform stems from its core assumption that higher levels of government structure local decision making. In these theories, the central government's power to set the terms of local interaction is not itself in contention. In contemporary metropolitan politics, by contrast, a key element of the political task is to ensure that higher levels of government enforce provisions that enhance network effectiveness and promote more inclusive local action. This problem suggests that the literature's emphasis on horizontal collaborative relationships is overly optimistic. In fact, the ability of local network members to exercise vertical power is a key variable in determining the effectiveness of regional collaborative processes (Swanstrom and Banks 2007; Hamilton, Miller, and Paytas 2004).

Virtuous Cycles of Reform in a Federal System

The concept of a virtuous cycle of policy reform starts from the assumption that enacting legislation is only the first step in securing reform. Transportation policy provides strong evidence that such virtuous cycles depend on distinct preconditions. In his analysis of general interest reforms, Eric Patashnik (2003) shows how some policy cycles can become vulnerable to attack when concentrated interests seek a return to the prereform status quo. The trajectory of such reforms is thus distinct from that of laws that benefit pre-existing powerful constituencies, which are able to cement their influence in the classic interest configuration of iron triangles. Patashnik highlights two conditions needed to make general interest reform sustainable: "a successful reworking of governing arrangements (making policy change difficult)" and "the creation or empowerment of groups with a stake in the policy reform's continuation (rendering policy change unattractive)" (p. 205). Meeting these two conditions is especially complex in the case of national policies that seek to alter subnational policy dynamics. It is therefore important to examine a third factor, the vertical dynamic by which top-down, bottom-up policy initiatives are developed over time.

One strategy for changing governing arrangements rests on institutional changes that give reformers special access to venues that are particularly receptive to reform objectives. By strengthening MPOs as the institutional focal point for regional approaches to transportation issues, reformers hoped to create just such a venue. Yet, unless the new venue is the exclusive locus of decision making, its decisions can be undermined by actions taken in other arenas. In the multi-tiered context, fledgling institutions are more likely to face competition from groups operating through existing channels of influence in local, state, and federal arenas. Strong regulatory action on the part of the federal government may help protect new institutions as they seek to carve out a domain of influence in the face of competition. In their design and implementation, we show, transportation reforms did little to impede competing channels of influence in national, state, and local politics, which the entrenched progrowth coalition of real estate and building industries used to achieve its goals. Moreover, the federal government failed to support the institutional strengthening of MPOs by aggressive use of its regulatory powers.

The second factor determining the sustainability of reform is the emergence of a supportive constituency. In contrast to the iron triangle model, where policy reinforces the power of narrow constituencies, or the pure policy feedback model, where the policy itself spawns new groups, we provide evidence for an organizational development model of constituency growth. When policy reforms do not provide immediate organizational or individual benefits, organizational intermediaries play a key role in knitting together and mobilizing supportive constituencies (Weir 2006). Understanding how such intermediaries emerge, how they secure resources, and how they build support for reform is an important but understudied component of constituency formation. In addition to the new incentives generated by policy, translocal networks of advocates—typically supported by foundations—are often a critically important element of constituency building. Likewise, local actors, who do not owe their existence to the policy but come to see it as a way to achieve their goals, can play a significant role in building constituencies (Weir 2000).

A third factor that must be examined is the dynamic process by which initial reform steps—often tentative and weak—are strengthened over time. This is particularly important for understanding national reforms that are not self-executing and must rely on the actions of local groups to achieve their goals. The critical question in such policies is not whether reforms can be sustained but rather whether they can be developed by launching a virtuous reform cycle. Such a cycle requires interaction between top-down policy initiatives and bottom-up action. Top-down initiatives facilitate fresh

approaches to old issues and provide levers for new modes of local action, but they must be matched by bottom-up initiative that builds the local organizational infrastructure to spread the ideas and deploy the new institutional levers. When there are competing venues of decision making, bottom-up action may be needed to ensure that new policy levers are not undercut by actions taken elsewhere. The need to rein in competing venues of decision making to promote a virtuous cycle of reform suggests that local organizations need vertical power. Such power allows them to enter into decision making at different levels of government to strengthen reform and limit challenges to it. This is especially important in the domain of regional governance because there is little scope for authoritative decision making at the regional level. However, the need for vertical power creates the danger that the reform trajectory will become dominated by the concerns of the most powerful local actors who champion it.

In the American federal system, virtuous cycles of reform represent a complex political achievement in which institutional reform and constituency formation emerge over time through cross-level political dynamics. Whether national reforms mark the start of a reform trajectory or atrophy after an early phase of activity depends on the processes of constituency formation and institution building initiated from below.

Methodology and Case Selection

To assess how variations in local social and political organization affected the trajectory of transportation reform, we collected data about local networks that emerged to influence transportation in the Chicago and Los Angeles regions.

Case Selection

The Los Angeles and Chicago regions were selected because they present significant contrasts in social organization and political coordination that imply different capacities to take advantage of opportunities to build new alliances and displace existing coalitions. Los Angeles has long been famed as a fragmented political setting where Progressive era reforms limited the power of political actors and depressed political participation (Fogelson 1967). In the past decade, however, there has been significant mobilization of groups advocating on behalf of Los Angeles's very large low-income, and often immigrant, communities. By contrast, the Chicago

region has often been depicted as consisting of two centralized antagonistic political forces: a Democratic patronage regime centered in Chicago and strongly Republican suburbs in which the DuPage Republican party provided the organizational component (Weir 1996). In addition to its centralized politics, the Chicago region is noted for a relatively organized social sector—both in the business community and among community-based organizations (Hamilton 2002).

These differences between the two regions suggest that change from below may be easier in Los Angeles, where bottom-up initiatives may more readily coalesce among mobilizing community groups and where the fragmentation of political power reduces the obstacles they confront. In Chicago, where centralized political power can make it more difficult for bottom-up initiatives to gain traction, the power of the political sector may also stifle initiatives from those on the fringes of current power arrangements.

Interview Sample

Drawing from a universe of groups initially assembled through an Internet search and extended through a snowball sample, we interviewed 41 groups active in transportation issues in the Los Angeles region and 35 in the Chicago region. We began our Internet search with the MPO, noting the groups listed on the MPO Web site, tracing groups connected to those groups through Web links, and extending our sample with responses to the interview question, "What other actors are important in regional transportation decision making?"

Our interview sample was designed to ensure representation from a range of groups that identified their primary interests in one of five main issue areas, including industry and economic development, environmental protection, public transportation, social justice and community organizing, and the overarching issues of regional livability or sustainability. In each issue area, we interviewed six to nine organizations. (See Tables 1 and 2 for a list of organizations in each issue area.) To ensure that we were collecting authoritative information about these groups, we sought to interview the chief executive officers, and when that was not possible, we interviewed other high-ranking representatives. The semistructured interviews were conducted in 2003 for Los Angeles and 2005 for Chicago. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. Selected qualitative interviews were also conducted in 2000 and 2001. Follow-up interviews were conducted in Chicago 2006 and 2007 to assess the institutional reforms that were under way.

Table 1
Chicago Centrality and Power Scores

Area of interest and group	Betweenness Centrality		Bonacich Power ($\beta = 0$)		Bonacich Power[a] ($\beta = .5$)	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Regional sustainability						
Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT)	2	20.65	1	4.50	8	3.67
Chicagoland Bicycle Federation (CBF)	4	17.86	3	3.50	5	3.98
Chicago Metropolis 2020 (M2020)	5	17.22	2	4.00	1	8.86
Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC)	6	12.76	4	3.00	3	5.67
Break the Gridlock (BTG)	11	6.96	5	2.50	6	3.93
Congress for New Urbanism (CNU)	23	0.36	7	1.50	22	0.00
Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC)	25	0.00	7	1.50	9	3.18
Preservation Chicago (PC)	25	0.00	8	1.00	22	0.00
Industry and economic development						
Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce (CLCC)	12	6.81	4	3.00	2	5.99
Southern Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMA)	17	1.80	8	1.00	21	0.50
World Business Council (WBC)	19	1.43	5	2.50	11	2.72
Civic Federation (CF)	24	0.31	8	1.00	22	0.00
Commercial Club of Chicago (CommCC)	25	0.00	7	1.50	7	3.89
Attainable Housing Alliance/Home Builders Association (HBA)	25	0.00	9	0.50	22	0.00
Environment						
Illinois Environmental Council (IEC)	13	5.53	7	1.50	22	0.00
Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC)	16	3.29	6	2.00	10	3.17
Sierra Club	20	1.40	7	1.50	12	2.67
American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ALA)	25	0.00	9	0.50	21	0.50
Campaign for a Free and Clear Lakefront (CFCL)	25	0.00	8	1.00	22	0.00
Friends of the Chicago River (FOCR)	25	0.00	10	0.00	22	0.00

(continued)

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Table 1 (continued)

Area of interest and group	Betweenness Centrality		Bonacich Power ($\beta = 0$)		Bonacich Power[a] ($\beta = .5$)	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Public transportation						
Citizen Action Illinois (CAI)	1	21.52	1	4.50	19	1.00
Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)	3	18.90	5	2.50	22	0.00
Citizens Taking Action (CTA)	8	9.93	4	3.00	22	0.00
Neighborhood Capital Budget Group (NCBG)	10	9.27	5	2.50	4	4.18
Transit Riders Authority (TRA)	18	1.72	8	1.00	22	0.00
Grey Line Initiative (GLI)	25	0.00	8	1.00	18	1.13
Social justice and community organizing						
Pilsen Alliance (PA)	7	10.70	7	1.50	17	1.20
Metro Seniors in Action (MSA)	14	4.80	6	2.00	13	2.56
Jane Addams Senior Caucus (JASC)	15	3.87	5	2.50	16	1.25
Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO)	21	1.31	8	1.00	14	2.05
Hyde Park/Kenwood Community Conference (HPKCC)	22	0.94	7	1.50	21	0.50
Bethel New Life (BNL)	25	0.00	9	0.50	22	0.00
Equip for Equality (EFE)	25	0.00	10	0.00	22	0.00
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs (JCUA)	25	0.00	8	1.00	20	0.80

a. normalized scores reported.

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Table 2
Los Angeles Centrality and Power Scores

Area of interest and group	Betweenness Centrality		Bonacich Power ($\beta = 0$)		Bonacich Power[a] ($\beta = .5$)	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Regional sustainability						
California Center for Regional Leadership (CCRL)	5	62.29	2	5.00	4	10.67
California Futures Network, Region (CFNR)	11	44.42	2	5.00	1	12.74
LA Conservancy (LAC)	34	0.00	11	0.50	37	0.36
LA County Bicycle Coalition (LACBC)	7	53.38	4	4.00	16	6.17
LA Neighborhood Initiative (LANI)	24	9.02	10	1.00	34	1.34
Latino Urban Forum (LUF)	22	10.73	6	3.00	11	7.11
Livable Places (LP)	15	27.54	5	3.50	8	8.24
Local Government Commission (LGC)	27	7.06	6	3.00	7	8.46
Los Angeles Walks (LAW)	30	4.77	9	1.50	24	3.83
Southern California Transportation and Land Use Coalition (SCTLUC)	3	91.20	1	6.00	2	12.62
Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP)	6	59.62	2	5.00	3	11.35
Industry and economic development						
Building Industry Association of Southern California (BIAA)	18	19.83	7	2.50	19	5.39
Central City Association (CCA)	10	46.24	7	2.50	29	2.55
Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley (EASF)	13	38.46	7	2.50	20	4.77
Gateway Cities Partnership (GCP)	23	9.20	9	1.50	27	2.80
LA Chamber of Commerce (LACoC)	4	68.34	5	3.50	15	6.72
Orange County Building Council (OCBC)	31	3.46	8	2.00	25	3.32
Urban Land Institute (ULI)	25	8.01	8	2.00	22	4.37

(*continued*)

Table 2 (continued)

Area of interest and group	Betweenness Centrality		Bonacich Power ($\beta = 0$)		Bonacich Power[a] ($\beta = .5$)	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Environment						
Coalition for Clean Air (CFCA)	2	94.53	2	5.00	9	8.18
Endangered Habitats League (EHL)	16	25.31	4	4.00	5	9.28
Environmental Defense (ED)	26	7.98	6	3.00	14	6.87
Environment Now (EN)	32	1.53	9	1.50	26	3.18
Northeast Trees (NET)	33	0.42	10	1.00	33	1.48
Physicians for Social Responsibility (PST)	29	4.92	9	1.50	31	1.91
Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter (SC)	19	15.96	7	2.50	23	4.32
Southern California Council on Economy & Development (SCCED)	8	52.05	3	4.50	6	8.47
Public transportation						
Bus Riders Union (BRU)	9	49.80	7	2.50	28	2.65
Friends for EXPO (EXPO)	17	21.04	6	3.00	18	5.48
Odyssey 20-20 (ODYS)	12	42.12	6	3.00	12	7.00
Southern California Transit Advocates (SCTA)	20	15.02	6	3.00	13	6.96
Social justice and community organizing						
Alameda Corridor Jobs Coalition (ACJC)	1	106.70	4	4.00	17	5.97
Archdiocese of LA, Office of Justice & Peace (ARCH)	34	0.00	11	0.50	35	0.84
Communities for a Better Environment (CBE)	28	6.44	8	2.00	30	2.40
Garment Workers Center (GWC)	34	0.00	11	0.50	36	0.37
Legal Aid Foundation of LA (LAFLA)	14	29.20	6	3.00	21	4.76
Pacoima Beautiful (PB)	34	0.00	10	1.00	32	1.49
Policylink (PL)	21	11.45	6	3.00	10	7.87

a. normalized scores reported.

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We collected the data using a semistructured questionnaire that took about 45 minutes to administer. The first part of the questionnaire asked about the background of the organization and its connections to other groups working on transportation. The second part then posed open-ended questions about the group's engagement in transportation and asked for their assessment of the impact of ISTEA.

Constructing and Analyzing the Network

In collecting data, our goal was to understand the overall structure of transportation policy networks. First, we wanted to assess the extent to which organizations engaged in horizontal collaboration. Second, we wanted to probe the articulation of this network. For example, did organizations collaborate across issue areas or only with organizations representing the same types of issues? To measure this collaboration, we showed interview participants a list of organizations and asked them to "check every name on the list that your organization has worked with as part of its transportation work." We expected this question to generate an inclusive network, because "working with" another organization does not necessarily connote very extensive or intensive relationships. In network theoretic terms, this question captures weak ties among organizations (Granovetter 1973).

We were concerned, however, that merely "working with" other organizations was too low a threshold, thereby indicating the existence of a network when in fact the relationships were infrequent and casual. Moreover, we knew that network ties could represent something more than simply patterns of collaboration; they could also represent political alliances. To tap this more restricted network, we followed up on our initial question by asking interviewees to specify the organizations they had just named with whom they worked "closely." This question was intended to identify the strong tie network, which we expected to more closely represent the pattern of political ties in each city (Krackhardt 1992).

In analyzing the data generated by our interviews, we sought to represent the main tendencies in the structure of these networks. Even a fairly sparse social network can create a visually uninterpretable spaghetti of relationships, and that was certainly the case here. Therefore, we sought to represent a reduced form of the overall network—a visualization that preserves the main tendencies of the network while stripping away some of its complexity. In the language of social network analysis, we did this by assigning organizations to blocks (White, Boorman, and Breiger 1976; Wasserman and Faust 1994). We used our five issue categories—industry and economic development, environmental protection, public transportation, social justice

and community organizing, and regional sustainability and livability—as blocks and assigned organizations to them based on their response to an interview question that asked them to describe their central mission.

Using UCINET 6 (Borgatti, Everett, and Freeman 2002), we then analyzed the density of network ties within and between these issue blocks.[1] A relationship between two blocks is only reported if the density of ties between the blocks is greater than the overall density of the entire network. This reduced form network does not have the fine-grained detail of the original network data but permits visual identification of the central tendencies.[2]

To understand the brokerage or intermediary role different organizations might play in our two networks, we also assessed their network centrality. Social network theory has developed a family of centrality measures that capture different aspects of the centrality of actors.[3] Among the three types of centrality identified by Freeman (1979)—degree, closeness, and betweenness–betweenness centrality is regarded as the best measure of the potential that an actor will play a brokerage role within a network. Betweenness centrality measures the degree to which an actor lies on the shortest path between other actors in the network. To the extent that organizations must go through that organization to communicate with other organizations, betweenness identifies the likelihood that the intermediary organization will operate as a broker. This ability to serve as a broker is often assumed to be a source of power.

Given our concern about whether new organizations were gaining access to the decision-making process, we also included a measure of the power of actors in the network. Bonacich (1987) has argued for the need to distinguish between centrality and power in social networks. The basic intuition is that power is a function of how a well-connected actor is connected to other well-connected actors. Actors may be more powerful if connected to actors who are themselves only weakly connected to other actors (and thus dependent on those actors for connections). Or an actor may be more powerful if connected to other well-connected actors. Bonacich's power measure uses a parameter (β) to reflect whether power arises from relationships to weakly or well-connected actors. When β is negative, power is a function of whether the actor is connected to weakly connected (and hence dependent) actors. When β is positive, the power measure increases to the extent that the actor is connected to other well-connected actors. Our interviews suggested that power in our networks was skewed toward a few well-connected actors, so we used both a neutral value ($\beta = 0$) as a baseline and a positive value ($\beta = .5$) to reflect the importance of being connected to other well-connected organizations.[4]

Creating New Constituencies

Much as the policy feedback literature suggests, federal transportation reforms helped generate new constituencies and fresh ideas about transportation in Los Angeles and Chicago. In both regions, new groups formed expressly to influence transportation decisions, and many existing groups added transportation to their issue portfolio. Federal reforms helped to reframe transportation by expanding the agenda to include discussion of alternative transportation modes and to highlight the importance of transportation in achieving multiple regional goals, not simply efficient mobility. In both regions, newly formed intermediary organizations, whose central mission was to promote ideals of regional sustainability, were key to making new connections across distinct functional groups and for recasting transportation issues into a broader framework. These first steps toward launching a virtuous cycle of reform created new connections across groups and witnessed efforts to build common interest around regional approaches to transportation.

New Organizations and the Emergence of a Network

In both regions, the new interest in transportation was evident in the entry of established groups into transportation as well as in the formation of new groups (see Figure 1). On balance, the groups in the Los Angeles network tended to be more recent entrants into the debates about transportation than the Chicago groups. Only 42% of the Los Angeles groups we interviewed were founded before the 1991 reforms in transportation policy, and only 21% of them had worked on transportation before that time. In Chicago, 60% of the groups had been organized before 1990 and, in contrast to Los Angeles, 75% of them had worked on transportation issues before that time. Moreover, in Chicago, many of the new groups were spin-offs of organizations that had much longer histories. For example, Chicago Metropolis 2020, a business-linked organization formed in 1999 to promote a regional agenda, emerged as a project of the Commercial Club, an elite business organization founded in 1877. The Campaign for Sensible Growth, launched in the late 1990s, grew out of the 70-year-old Metropolitan Planning Council (Hamilton 2002).

Not only did new groups form and older organizations enter the transportation field after the passage of federal reforms, but these groups also began to work together in new ways that enhanced possibilities for recognizing common interests. Figures 2 and 3 present the image diagrams for

Figure 1
Start Dates for Organizations in Los Angeles and
Chicago and Their Transportation Work
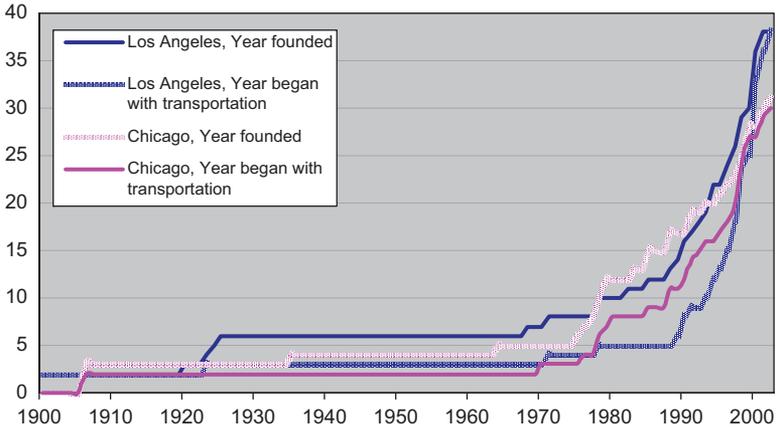
the strong tie networks in Chicago and Los Angeles. For ease of visual interpretation, we also indicate the actors with the five highest betweenness centrality and Bonacich power scores ($\beta = .5$) and the average Bonacich power score ($\beta = .5$) for each block in Figures 2 and 3. In both the block model and centrality analyses, groups that defined their mission as promoting regional sustainability occupied a central position in the Chicago and Los Angeles networks. As such, they served as network brokers, connecting a diverse array of functional organizations, including environmental groups, industry and economic development groups, organizations concerned with public transportation, and groups whose central mission was social justice and community organizing. Indeed, without these regional sustainability groups, the ties among the different organizations in the network would have been much more attenuated.

Tables 1 and 2 report the results for the three centrality and power measures. These results are broadly consistent with each other in that they identify roughly the same actors as central in the two networks (see the rank ordering of actors within and between blocks in Tables 1 and 2). Perhaps the most interesting contrasts arise from a comparison of betweenness centrality—the standard measure of brokerage potential—with the Bonacich power measure that relates power to connectedness to other well-connected

Figure 2
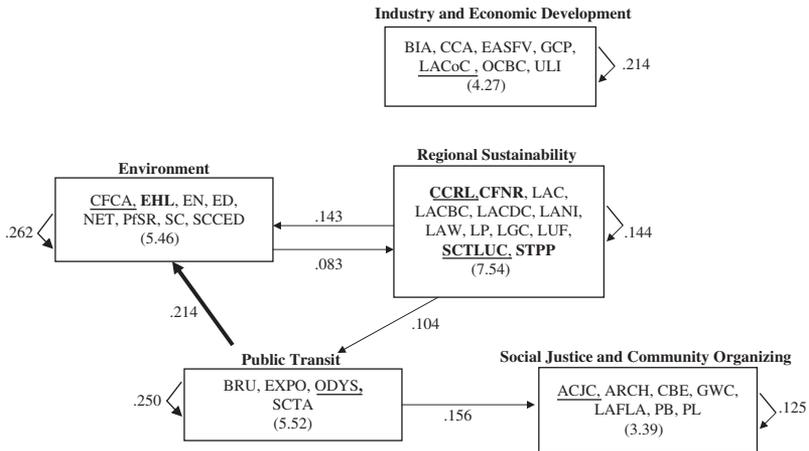**Chicago Transportation Policy Network: Strong Ties**
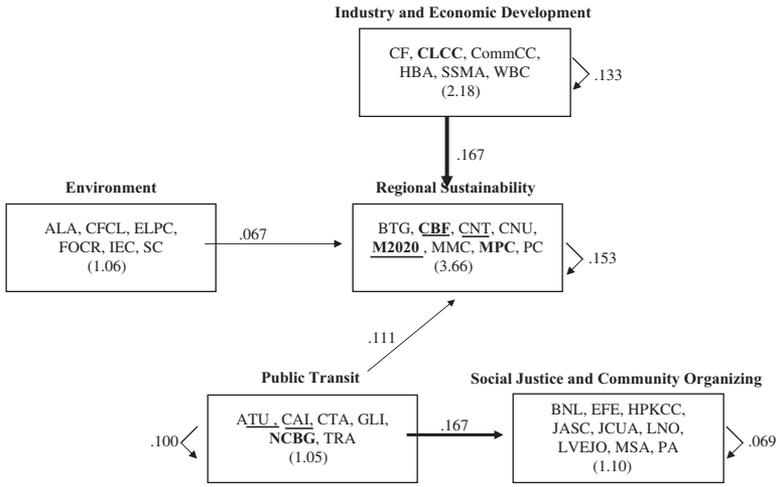
Note: Overall density of the network: .0571; only ties greater than overall density are reported; thick lines are greater than twice the overall density; for groups with five highest betweeness, the centrality scores are underlined; The groups with five highest Bonacich scores ($\beta = .5$) are in bold; the average Bonacich power scores ($\beta = .5$) for the block are in parentheses.

actors. For example, the average betweenness centrality of the Chicago public transportation block (10.22) actually exceeds that of the regional sustainability block (9.48), and one of its organizations—Citizen Action Illinois—is the most central organization in the entire network. However, in terms of the Bonacich power measure, the regional sustainability block is ranked first (3.66) and the public transportation block last (1.05). Moreover, Citizen Action Illinois is only ranked 19th in terms of the Bonacich power measure.

A similar kind of contrast is at work within blocks. For example, the Center for Neighborhood Technology is ranked number one within the regional sustainability block on the basis of betweenness centrality, but Chicago Metropolis 2020 is by far the top-ranked organization using the Bonacich measure that rewards links to well-connected organizations. The substantive meaning of these contrasts is that citizens groups such as Citizen Action Illinois and the Center for Neighborhood Technology are doing a good job of linking other weakly connected actors together but are

Figure 3
Los Angeles Transportation Policy Network: Strong Ties

Note: Overall density of the network: .0825; only ties greater than overall density are reported; thick lines are greater than twice the overall density; for groups with five highest betweeness, the centrality scores are underlined; the groups with five highest Bonacich scores (β = .5) are in bold; the average Bonacich power scores (β = .5) for the block are in parentheses.

less connected to other well-connected organizations. By contrast, in terms of connections to other well-connected actors, Chicago Metropolis 2020 really stands out, as do two other organizations—the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce and the Metropolitan Planning Council. These finding are consistent with our interviews, which found these organizations to be particularly important.

The contrast between power and betweenness centrality is not as great for the Los Angeles network. The regional sustainability block generally has the highest centrality and power. In terms of individual organizations, the Alameda Corridor Jobs Coalition is ranked 1st on betweenness centrality but drops to 22nd place in terms of the Bonacich power measure that captures the importance of links to well-connected actors. However, another similar organization, the Southern California Transportation and Land Use Coalition, retains its high rankings across all the different power and centrality measures. Strikingly, there is no equivalent to Chicago Metropolis 2020 in Los Angeles. The California Futures Network does

jump from 8th place in betweenness centrality to 1st place on the Bonacich power measure ($\beta = .5$), but our interviews indicate that it never exercised influence remotely comparable to that of Chicago Metropolis 2020.

These findings show that the value of being connected to well-connected others is probably not as important in Los Angeles as in Chicago. As we will see, the well-connected actors in the Los Angeles network had little autonomous existence or power. Moreover, because they served largely a convening function with little capacity to mobilize politically, their connections were not easily converted into political power.

Federal Policy and Constituency Creation

Although we do not have data prior to the federal reforms that would directly show the impact of policy on the pattern of connection among these diverse groups, several features of the most central groups in each region strongly indicate that federal reforms played a role in facilitating new networks and spreading new ideas about transportation. The first is the age of these organizations: sixty-eight percent of the regional sustainability organizations in the central blocks were founded after 1991, the year the first federal reform was enacted.

Second is how closely the stated objectives of these organizations correlate with those of the federal reform: the groups in the central regional sustainability block in each region uniformly identified their main objectives in terms that resonated with the goals of federal transportation reforms, including promoting transportation alternatives, creating livable urban regions, empowering the public to determine how local governments spend their money, and promoting greater public awareness and participation. For example, in Chicago's central block, the group with the highest betweenness centrality (second highest for the entire network), the Center for Neighborhood Technology, describes its mission as to promote "environmentally sustainable economic development and to create tools to help the general public realize the benefits of those things and put them into effect" (interview, June 28, 2005). In Los Angeles, the group with the highest betweenness centrality in the core block, the Southern California Transportation and Land Use Coalition, defined its objectives as promoting "greater public awareness and involvement in regards to growth trade-offs, to have public understanding and engagement" (interview, March 13, 2003).

The developments in the Chicago and Los Angeles regions after 1991 fit well with theories about the influence of policy on politics: new groups emerged to participate in transportation decisions, existing organizations

entered the arena, and brokers forged connections among them and actively promoted new ways of thinking about the role of transportation in metropolitan development. But two very different kinds of networks formed: in Chicago, a more centralized network with powerful actors at its core emerged, whereas in Los Angeles, a more fragmented network with weak actors at its core took shape.

Participation and Institutional Reform

The more collaborative and participatory model of planning envisioned in the ISTEA legislation called for a change in the way MPOs were accustomed to doing business. Not only did they now have to set up new organizational procedures to accommodate public participation but MPOs were also supposed to be open to a range of ideas formerly outside the scope of transportation planning. Bureaucratic inertia and the prerogatives of professional knowledge in the agencies meant that complying with the new law took time. Interviews revealed that pressure from the emerging transportation networks and changes from within the agencies themselves gradually made MPOs more responsive, the planning process more transparent, and the range of voices in the transportation arena broader.

Mobilizing to Participate

In the years immediately following the federal reform, public participation in the MPO planning process remained limited. Advocacy groups reported that they initially struggled simply to get the planning agencies to hold meetings during times when the public could attend. For example, in Los Angeles, a subset of local groups drawn from the environmental justice and social justice blocks of the network formed a temporary alliance in 2001. Calling themselves the Los Angeles Transportation Equity Network, they sought to expand the public voice in drawing up the regional plan and challenged the MPO for failing to engage the public, citing its practice of holding meetings in the middle of the day on a weekday. Their complaint briefly put the federal certification in jeopardy, but the federal regulators were not willing to use their power to do more than put the agency on notice (interview, March 14, 2003).

Chicago's Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) experienced similar difficulties with the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), Chicago's MPO. Because the business organizations that became so central to the network after 1999 had not yet mobilized to participate in this domain,

CNT's main allies in this effort were community-based organizations, including the Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations.[5] As in Los Angeles, the advocates' initial objectives were basic: getting the agency to hold meetings in the city, in a venue accessible to public transportation instead of the suburban office that could only be reached by car (interview, June 28, 2005; Rothman, Beckwith, and Stolz 1998). Allowing the public to testify was only the first step. Once CATS accepted broader participation, it strictly followed the letter of the law, showing little substantive interest in public views. For example, to show that the public had been consulted, the agency produced a 15-pound compilation of public comments that had never been analyzed. As CNT's transportation expert Jan Metzger noted, "They were weighing it, instead of saying what it meant." CNT took up the challenge of analyzing the comments to produce a report about public priorities (interview, June 28, 2006).

Around the country, dissatisfaction with MPO responsiveness prompted the creation of a campaign that joined local community activists into the Transportation Equity Network, organized by a national advocacy and technical assistance organization, the Center for Community Change. In Los Angeles and Chicago, community-based organizations participated, urging their congressional representatives to support changes in the federal law to make participation more meaningful (Rothman, Beckwith, and Stolz 1998). When ISTEA came up for reauthorization in 1998, this multilevel coalition not only successfully defended the participation requirements against opponents in the powerful highway lobby but it also strengthened those provisions. The new law now required metropolitan and statewide planning agencies to consult with users of public transportation and mandated that the public be involved in certification reviews of MPOs (Kruglik and Stolz 1999).

Assessing the Impact of Participation

By the time we completed our formal questionnaire in 2003 for Los Angeles and 2006 for Chicago, a majority of advocates in both regions reported that the decision-making process had become more open. We asked interviewees how decision making had changed since their group became involved in transportation, dividing up responses into those reporting that some positive changes had occurred, those stating that very little or no change had taken place, and those who reported that things had gotten worse. Of the 76 semistructured interviews conducted, 62% of the respondents maintained that the decision-making arena had changed for the better. Responses indicating that MPOs were now open to a greater range of voices

and issues; those that highlighted increased transparency and those that pointed to changed ways of thinking about transportation issues were all coded as positive.

Those who noted that the range of voices and issues in transportation decision-making had expanded cited a combination of outside pressure and internal changes as the cause. For example, one California advocate working for a transportation organization assessed the changes as follows: "The outlook for public involvement has improved in the last ten years. A majority of agencies have interpreted the requirements as allowing two-minute responses at public meetings. However, technology is changing that. . . . It is engaging people in more interactive and meaningful ways." When asked about the impact of ISTEA on public engagement, this advocate went on to grade the public involvement effort: "Changes in public involvement I would give a 'B.' There are some things I would give an 'A,' but that's a 'B.' It's a hard thing to do. A lot of agencies have been resistant, but that's changing. ISTEA is as important for its mythology as its changes to the law" (interview, September 3, 2003). Another transportation advocate observed, "Advocacy has gotten thicker. There are more people and more people from other fields" (interview, August 29, 2003). One Chicago environmental advocate noted, "There is more of an awareness of including public opinion, especially with regard to the planning agency. CATS is more attentive to public opinion than in the past; the CTA [Chicago Transportation Agency] as well, perhaps" (interview, May 4, 2006).

In both Los Angeles and Chicago, interviewees cited leadership and generational changes in the MPO as a cause of greater openness. For example, one Chicago advocate responded that "The generation of White guys who were unquestioned have been replaced by a new group of decision makers. There's been generational change" (interview, June 28, 2005). A respondent from a business-sponsored Chicago organization stated that "within agencies, mid-level agency staff people knew they have been doing it wrong and are looking for change" (interview, June 27, 2005). In Los Angeles, an environmental advocate noted the impact of staff changes on receptivity: "We have more say now on freeway projects. There is more public input on projects through public hearings. There are also more nonengineers within the planning department" (interview, July 28, 2003).

Positive assessments also highlighted increased transparency, especially in Chicago. As a representative from a Chicago sustainability organization said, "There has been a move in this region towards greater transparency in decision making. I would say for procedures in the recent revision, the CATS process has been much more open in this one than in others" (interview,

July 18, 2005). Similarly, as one metropolitan political leader stated, "I think the transportation planning process is more transparent today than it was two transportation bills ago. ISTEA and T21 have both been pieces of legislation that have opened the process up to more actors and gotten people more involved" (interview, July 13, 2005).

Respondents in both regions pointed to significant changes in thinking about transportation policy. As an advocate for the Chicago business community said, "There has been an emergence of a regional sensibility. It really is taking hold in a variety of ways. So there really is a sense that there is one economy. It's been a phenomenon of recent years that there is a sense of common future (as opposed to city democrats versus republicans or big city versus small suburbs), but there still is the politics" (interview, July 11, 2005). A Los Angeles respondent noted, "leaders are finally waking up to the fact that they have made a huge mistake in spending millions and millions of dollars on airports and highways and very little money on public transportation" (interview, August 18, 2003).

The one undercurrent of concern, even among those respondents who reported that significant positive changes had occurred, was the sense that the political environment for transportation decision making remained an obstacle. As one Los Angeles activist put it, "Stakeholder groups can progress internally—reaching agreement, making recommendations—but there is no authority to implement them. Or we can get builders and environmentalists to agree, but elected officials still say no" (interview, June 23, 2003). A Los Angeles transportation advocate observed: "I have not seen a marked increase on legislators' understanding" (interview, August 29, 2003). An advocate from a Chicago public health organization responded that ISTEA had changed transportation politics so that "people have the ability to participate and complain but they can't change old policies" (interview, July 22, 2005). Another Chicago respondent assessed transportation decision making this way: "I don't know if it's changed too much, maybe conversations are a lot more open. But as far as decision making, it is still City Hall making decisions relative to Chicago and is still the state/federal government making decisions on funding priorities. But we have more of a voice, but how it is realized is the same" (interview, July 18, 2005).

These pessimistic assessments of the political environment raise questions about the ultimate impact and durability of federal transportation reforms. Reforms of multilevel policies, such as transportation, are especially precarious, because reform opponents can use competing decision-making arenas to undermine change. When decisions made in alternative venues box reformers in, the momentum for change will be difficult to

sustain. However, if reformers begin to build a positive cycle between constituency engagement and institutional change, they can expand the scope for reform objectives and embark on a more promising reform trajectory.

Participation, Vertical Power, and Institution Building

The divergent reform trajectories in Chicago and Los Angeles after 2006 illustrate the importance of creating a virtuous cycle in which constituency engagement promotes institutional change. In Los Angeles, the failure to strengthen the MPO in relation to other decision-making arenas sapped reform momentum and undermined the network. In Chicago, by contrast, a successful campaign to strengthen the MPO laid the ground work for ongoing reform. The difference can be traced to the powerful groups at the core of the Chicago network. Through the exercise of vertical power, these groups were able to open new institutional space in which to pursue the regional vision embodied in the original ISTEA legislation.

Competing Policy-Making Venues Above and Below the Region

Both the Los Angeles and the Chicago regions faced the problem of inserting the regional voice into the competing venues responsible for making decisions about transportation spending. Although ISTEA laid the groundwork for more powerful MPOs, state and local governments continued to dominate transportation decision making since they controlled most spending decisions. In California, the authority of subregional governments over transportation created significant obstacles to building regional power. Although California is often held up as a model for realizing ISTEA's goals of devolving power from the state to the region, the state effectively made counties—not regions—the key decision-making venues by guaranteeing a county share of the funding (Innes and Gruber 2001; Lewis 2001). Reforms to enhance regional capacity in Los Angeles were further handicapped by the state's decision to provide funding directly to the operational authority, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority, not to the larger regional Southern California Association of Governments, the official MPO. Moreover, in California, localities make critical decisions about transportation because local sales tax measures play a central role in transportation funding (Giuliano 2004).

In the Chicago region, the problem was not the power of subregional governments but the refusal of the state government to devolve funds and responsibility to the region. Despite the clear intent of the federal legislation to give MPOs authority over a portion of the transportation funds, control remained firmly in the hands of the Illinois Department of Transportation. State decision makers resisted efforts to open up their tight circle of policy making. One reason they succeeded so well in holding onto power was the anomalous status of the CATS, the Chicago region's MPO. Set up in 1955, CATS operated as an arm of the Illinois Department of Transportation, not as an independent agency. Even after the federal transportation policy reforms in the 1990s, CATS remained under the direct control of the state Department of Transportation. Moreover, the regional perspective in Chicago was muffled by the fragmentation of planning functions across two agencies: CATS bore responsibility only for transportation. Broader regional land use planning was the purview of a separate entity: the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission.

Regional Networks and Vertical Power

Faced with institutional competitors from above and below, the region cannot become an important venue for transportation policy making unless regional actors can exercise power in these competing arenas. As a result, the reform network's ability to exercise vertical power—in political arenas above and below the region—is a critical component in carving out the space for regional governance. A coherent horizontal network may contribute to building vertical power, but whether it does so depends on which groups are connected in the network.

When we compare the horizontal and vertical ties of the Los Angeles and Chicago networks, it becomes apparent that the horizontal ties in the Los Angeles network linked a group of mostly weak actors. The activities and development of the Los Angeles network show that establishing broad horizontal ties among groups that lack vertical power provides a weak foundation for building regional capacity. Chicago's experience, on the other hand, demonstrates the possibility of using vertical power to promote institutional reform with the potential to launch a virtuous cycle of reform.

The striking feature of the Los Angeles network was its disconnection from the levers of power. The regional sustainability block at the center of the Los Angeles network focused its efforts on regional agenda setting and dialogue. When asked to name the top three issues on which they worked, interviewees in Los Angeles groups were much more likely than those in

Chicago to frame their issues in terms of complex regional sustainability, including smart growth, infrastructure improvements, and transit-oriented development. These frames connected transportation to big questions about how the region is built and how transportation connects to regional lifestyles. Groups, such as the California Futures Network and the Southern California Transportation and Land Use Coalition,[6] the two top-scoring organizations in the Bonacich power measure, defined their missions as promoting regional networking and spurring possible new collaborations. These organizations were more disposed to bringing together stakeholders or engaging in community education rather than entering into political arenas.

This combination of planning vision and political caution accurately reflected the capacities of the groups at the core of the Los Angeles network. The groups were hampered by unreliable funding, small staffs, and little connection to political power. Most of these organizations owed their existence to an infusion of foundation funds, reflecting the interest in building regional capacity in the 1990s. When these funds dried up as foundation priorities shifted a decade later, the core block in the Los Angeles network all but disappeared. Of the four most connected groups in that block (California Futures Network, Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition, the Southern California Transportation and Land Use Coalition, and the Surface Transportation Policy Project), by 2007, one no longer existed, one had been transformed into a new group with a new name, and one had closed its Los Angeles office. With such precarious groups at the center of the network, the new visions for transportation that the network brought into public debate stood little chance of implementation.

Especially telling was the network's lack of access to key social interests with financial resources and political influence. The block model analysis of strong ties in Los Angeles in Figure 3 reveals that the business block's connection to the network was weaker than that of any other group (indeed less than the overall density for the network). The lack of strong business engagement left the regional sustainability block without the resources and influence typically associated with business leaders. Indeed, in the Los Angeles region, the most notable business voice is represented by the dispersed prodevelopment groups most likely to oppose strengthening regional capacity and inviting new voices in (Gottlieb et al. 2005). Likewise, organized labor, which has more recently built substantial power in Los Angeles city and county politics, was only loosely connected to this network. Labor's main link was through its support for advocacy groups, such as the Bus Riders Union, which was itself only weakly tied to the network's core regional sustainability group.

As a consequence, the Los Angeles network promoted innovative ideas about regional transportation but could do little to increase regional authority in transportation decisions. As a representative from the once highly central and now defunct California Futures Network put it, "Social equity groups are inspiring, but in political reality, groups need to have money or voters. The Building Industry Association has money. Labor has voters. CFN [California Futures Network] has moral righteousness on their side. That is the weakest kind of leverage . . ." (interview, August 18, 2003).[7]

The potential for vertical power at the core of the Chicago network presents a sharp contrast. At the heart of the Chicago network are organizations tied to the city's powerful business community, which enjoys close connections to Chicago's mayor. Business-linked groups did not always occupy such a central position in the transportation network, but with the creation of Chicago Metropolis 2020 in 1999, they quickly emerged as the most powerful actor in the network. As Figure 2 shows, the groups in the core regional sustainability block that hold the network together include business-linked organizations such as Chicago Metropolis 2020 and long-standing elite civic organizations such as the Metropolitan Planning Council. This core block also includes an important new political actor, the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. Formed in 1997 at the instigation of Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, the organization seeks to find common ground among local governments throughout the entire Chicago region. Although the caucus has little power to act on its own, it can provide a forum for brokering compromises among the 272 municipal governments in the region.

In addition to the presence of these powerful groups in the core block, Figure 2 shows that other business and economic development organizations are strongly connected to the core regional sustainability block. The engagement of these powerful political actors enhanced the possibilities for using vertical power to promote institutional reforms that support regional capacity.[8]

The entry of the business-linked groups into the politics of transportation planning created new possibilities for building regional capacity. Chicago's unusually active and organized business sector is a significant political resource missing in many regions. Business concern about the development of the region as a whole led to the cornerstone report *Chicago Metropolis 2020: Preparing Metropolitan Chicago for the 21st Century* a product of the elite Commercial Club (Johnson 1999). The far-reaching report called for major changes in the policies and institutions governing the Chicago region. The central recommendation for reforming regional governance called on the state to establish a Regional Coordinating

Council. Rather than a command and control structure, the Council would use an incentive-based approach to foster regional thinking and action in transportation, land use, housing, and environmental policy.

As a first step toward realizing this ambitious goal, Chicago Metropolis 2020 joined like-minded elite civic organizations, such as the Metropolitan Planning Council, in a campaign to strengthen the regional MPO. The reform effort had two main targets: to secure the autonomy of the MPO from state government and to end the institutional fragmentation of planning in the region. Initial proposals to strengthen regional capacities by combining planning and operational capacities and consolidate planning functions provoked sharp opposition. Suburban mayors charged that the proposal was a power grab orchestrated by the city of Chicago (Lord 2004).

The horizontal relationships at the core of Chicago's regional sustainability block allowed reform proponents to win support for more limited institutional change. The legislation that ultimately passed in 2006 and 2007 merged the two regional planning organizations into a single agency, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). The new agency combined land use and planning functions but had no operational authority (Biemer 2004; Tita 2006). Notably, CMAP enjoys legal independence from the state's department of transportation, establishing a formally independent regional planning agency in Chicago for the first time.

The power of a leading segment of Chicago's business community in the state legislature was key to enacting the new reform. Even after winning the support of the region's mayors, the legislation faced resistance from the Illinois Department of Transportation, which was "not especially pleased that the MPO functions had been removed from their direct control," according to Frank Beal, executive director of Chicago Metropolis 2020 (M. Weir, personal correspondence, October 31, 2007). Other powerful opponents included realtors and home builders who succeeded in eliminating CMAP's authority over extensions of waste water treatment services— a critical decision point in making new real estate development feasible. The legislation strongly reflected the influence of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, which facilitated the final negotiations of the bill, including representation on the new regional planning agency.

The power at the core of the Chicago network and its ability to exercise influence in higher level political arenas produced an institutional reform long sought by regionally oriented reformers in the Chicago area. In a policy area traditionally dominated by the state and riven with conflict between the city and its suburbs, the reform succeeded in establishing an institutional focal point for regional planning. As such, it created new possibilities for building a

virtuous cycle between constituency engagement and regional institution building. And as Chicago Metropolis 2020 President George Ranney noted (interview, October 30, 2007), the road from the 1999 report to the 2007 reform legislation created intellectual changes: a new set of ideas about the need to think regionally became an accepted component in policy discussions.

The new law also significantly broadened representation in transportation planning. Whereas the old CATS board was dominated by transit operators, county leaders, and only one mayor, the new 21-member CMAP board organizes representation by county, giving Chicago and Cook County—the most urbanized sectors of the region—a total of 10 appointments (Chicago Area Transportation Study, 2008). By offering prominent representation to local officials, the law ensured that areas long underserved by public transportation, such as the south suburbs, now had a direct voice in transportation planning (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning 2007). Mayor Daley allocated two of Chicago's five appointees to representatives from the Chicago business (as represented by Chicago Metropolis 2020) and nonprofit communities.

The institutional reform represents a first step toward a more cohesive region that advances its interests in higher political arenas. By providing an institutional anchor for a regional network and a forum for working out compromises, CMAP can play a valuable role in constituting a legitimate regional voice. The representation of a broader spectrum of voices on the CMAP board sets the stage for informing transportation planning with a broader set of concerns, much as envisioned by the original ISTEA legislation. Even so, the gulf between regional planning documents and state spending decisions means that influence in state politics remains critical to the future of transportation in the Chicago region.

Federal transportation reforms were thus driven by quite different core groups in Los Angeles and in Chicago. The greater openness of politics in the Los Angeles region, which might be expected to facilitate policy innovation, did indeed foster discussion of a fresh set of ideas about how transportation should connect to metropolitan development. But the groups that emerged to promote regional capacity had little vertical power to carve out a domain in which regional institutions could exercise influence. In the Chicago region, civic activists from within Chicago's powerful business community saw a strengthened MPO as a tool for realizing its vision of building regional competitiveness for the twenty-first century. In Chicago, the local group ecology and cross-level political dynamics produced a more promising start in which participation and institutional reform may launch a virtuous cycle that builds regional capacities.

Regional Governance, Vertical Power, and Virtuous Cycles of Reform

Over the past two decades, a burgeoning literature has touted the promise of regional collaboration to address a wide range of issues. Frustration with political polarization and policy stalemate has spawned new interest in creating less confrontational venues that encourage dialogue and compromise among diverse interests (Innes and Gruber 2005; Alpert, Gainsborough, and Wallis 2006). Ideas about collaboration have particular resonance in metropolitan areas where many problems spill over local boundaries with no single governmental entity to address them.

The difficulties that reformers faced in promoting regional approaches to transportation highlight the challenge in pursuing regional goals in the absence of regional government. The reformers who initiated ISTEA hoped that the changes they made in federal policy would help create a very different kind of transportation politics by strengthening regional capacity and requiring broader participation. In one sense, they succeeded: new groups with previously unrepresented perspectives emerged to participate in transportation decision making. These groups joined with existing organizations to create new networks that shared information and fostered collaboration. Although the aspirations of federal reform were far reaching, the laws themselves were too weak to provide regional actors with the tools to override decisions in competing arenas. Only when local constituencies were strong enough to enter multiple political arenas, as in the case of Chicago, could they take the first steps toward launching a virtuous cycle of reform.

The slow pace and restricted impact of transportation policy in Los Angeles and Chicago underscore the limits of horizontal collaboration. These cases highlight instead the importance of vertical power in creating regional governance capacities. Because regions have little autonomous political power, decisions taken in regional venues are easily challenged in other political arenas. At the same time, policy goals enunciated from on high have little chance of successful implementation without the mobilization of local actors to push them forward. For regional efforts to be effective, they must be backed by political power sufficient either to prevail in competing decision-making venues or to block challenges from them. Without multilevel political capacities, the new ideas and incipient alliances that emerge from regional collaborations can be easily undermined from below or from above. No matter how inclusive and collaborative the networks or innovative the plans for regional transportation, they will produce little real change if not backed by vertical power.

Notes

1. Density is the number of actual ties between a set of actors divided by the total number of possible ties between them.

2. Consistent with the underlying data, the relationships in these diagrams are asymmetric (e.g., it is possible for a block to report a relationship with another block even when that relationship is not reciprocated).

3. See Borgatti and Everett (2006), for a discussion of how these centrality measures are related to one another.

4. As many researchers have noted, a liability of Bonacich's measure is that the value of β is arbitrary and must be set by the analyst. Although the block model analysis uses asymmetric data, we used symmetrical data (where all ties are assumed to be reciprocated) for our four power and centrality measures. It would be desirable to use asymmetrical data, but the reason for using symmetrical data is technical: these measures are designed for symmetrical data (Borgatti, Everett, and Freeman 2002).

5. Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations was not included in the network analysis.

6. Since our interviews, the Southern California Transportation and Land Use Coalition has changed its name to the Transportation and Land Use Collaborative of Southern California, changed offices, and changed leadership. Although the similarities between the two names reflect a likely continuity of purpose with the organization, we use the older name in use at the time of our interview.

7. The Innes and Rongerude (2005) study of collaborative regional initiatives in California found that although these foundation-funded regional collaborative organizations were successful in creating research, education, and dialogue, they could not effect political change. The Los Angeles network suffered a similar fate.

8. Alpert, Gainsborough, and Wallis (2006) have a similar finding, showing the importance of business activation for achieving regional reforms. Although they emphasize horizontal ties, the ability of the southern Florida business actors to operate in the state legislature was critical to their success.

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Margaret Weir is a professor of political science and sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, and a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. She is the author of several books, including *Politics and Jobs: The Boundaries of Employment Policy in the United States* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1992). She directs the MacArthur Foundation Network on Building Resilient Regions and is completing a study of metropolitan inequalities in the United States.

Jane Rongerude is a PhD candidate in the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research investigates the redevelopment of public housing and its relationship to metropolitan landscapes of poverty and opportunity. She is currently completing her dissertation titled "Regulated Public Environments: The New Geography of U.S. Urban Poverty."

Christopher K. Ansell is an associate professor of political science at the University of California, Berkeley and holds a PhD in political science from the University of Chicago. His research focuses on understanding conflict and cooperation in interorganizational and inter-governmental systems. He is the author of *Schism and Solidarity in Social Movements* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001) and coeditor of *Restructuring Territoriality: Europe and the United States Compared* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004) and *What's the Beef? The Contested Governance of European Food Safety* (MIT Press, 2006).