

January 10, 1980

Statement to Council by  
Mike Burton, outgoing Chairman

In the one year since its inception, the Metropolitan Service District has received a varied reaction ranging from rejection to high praise. While these opinions have come from a narrow perspective of our total population, one could argue that they are all right and that we deserve both the boot and the pat on the back.

But on the whole we have done well. To have taken this, the first regional government of its type in the United States, from its inception; to have formed initial operating procedures, formulated a budget from two different budgets; survived, successfully, a legislative session; adopted an Urban Growth Boundary; taken leadership in dealing with one of the region's most neglected and complex water pollution problems; established ourselves as the leader in transportation planning; and to have gotten further than any previous body in resolving the solid waste crisis confronting this region, has been no mean task. And yet we have done these things.

I do not believe any other newly formed governmental body has been called upon to accomplish so much in so short a period of time, but has at the same time had so little understanding by the public and other governmental bodies as to just what our role was.

There have been times when we were timid and slow in our deliberations. There have been times when we dealt with issues so complex that it was difficult to see that we could resolve them. But it was with due deliberation that these decisions were made. Each of the Councilors has reached an understanding of those complex matters far beyond what one could hope of a part-time governing body in just one short year.

Now we face our second year and even greater challenges. I do not need to tell you what these challenges are, but I think it is important to re-emphasize that what we do here will bear consequences for generations to come. We have long known the importance of land-use planning and the importance of transportation planning. Let me read you a quote about Portland by planner Harland Bartholomew:

"People have moved further out toward the country and have demanded pavements, sewers, water mains, gas lines, electric service and other improvements. Cities have complied with that demand, and as a consequence we find that great areas of vacant land or vacant lots have been hurdled in this movement and the costs of the improvements is far too heavy."

Mr. Bartholomew made that observation in 1932!

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Now we find another element in this necessary planning mode: energy planning. We must look at our land-use to insure maximum efficiency of energy. As we ask for energy efficient homes we must insure that our transportation system exemplifies economic and efficient usage.

Five years ago if you suggested a light-rail system for Portland you might find yourself a laughing stock. Now we are starting to plan for a possible second route for the region. Transportation and land-use planning must be done in concert. Transportation systems have been and possibly will continue to be the dominant factor - yet here is a paradox--you can remove streets, block intersections, bury rails and even tear down bridges, but once a land-use pattern is established following a transportation usage, it becomes far harder to change that pattern unless one is willing to remove businesses, tear down houses or close schools. So land-use, transportation and energy are the key elements of what we will have to deal with for our future.

And there will be new challenges: sewer systems, transit facilities, parks, airports, recreational facilities, possibly cable television and correctional institutions are all areas of regional concern. I do not think we should go out and grab these, but I feel they will come to us naturally and by necessity. Yet neither can we be timid. We must have confidence in ourselves. Government cannot find answers for all our

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problems, but it is a necessary and useful tool that when properly used can promote the general welfare.

As we deal with these matters we must do so with courage, with innovation, with humanness and with conviction. Each of us was elected to serve and represent a part of this region. To do so on a part-time basis, is not simple. Yet we chose to do so and we must live up to that commitment.