Historical Development of Metro

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Carl Abbott
Margery Post Abbott

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HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

OF THE

METROPOLITAN SERVICE DISTRICT

How old is Metro?

The most precise answer is twelve and a half years. Voters approved the present-day Metro in May 1978. The expanded agency went into operation on January 1, 1979.

A second response is 21 years, for the modern Metro is an expanded version of the original Metropolitan Service District that area voters approved in May 1970.

A third response is 34 years, for some of Metro's responsibilities have been passed down from the old Metropolitan Planning Commission, organized by Portland and the three urbanized counties in 1957.

A final answer is nearly 50 years, for the idea of a public body with responsibility for planning and public service delivery for the entire metropolitan area dates to the war years of the 1940s.

This brief history traces the evolution of Metro both as an idea and as an organization that serves an increasing range of public needs within the Portland metropolitan area. Several themes stand out as we look back at Metro's development and "family history."

- Metro is the product of continuing interaction among a concerned public, elected officials, and agency staff. Both an organization and an idea, Metro and its predecessor agencies have evolved with the help of hundreds of citizens who have dealt with the issues of metropolitan government through the League of Women Voters, Metropolitan Area Perspectives, the Metropolitan Citizens League, the City Club of Portland, and particularly the Portland

Metropolitan Study Commission of 1963-71 and the Tri-County Local Government Commission of 1975-77.

- The creation of Metro in 1978 involved the convergence of two parallel but distinct concerns. One was the desire for effective regional coordination and comprehensive regional planning. The second was the desire to develop ways to deliver regional services under regional management. Much of the history behind Metro is the story of efforts to bring these two functions under unified direction.

- Since the 1950s, public interest in strengthening regional government has been driven by the related concerns of efficiency and accountability. Areawide planning, coordination, and service delivery can reduce duplication and hold down the costs of public services. At the same time, areawide agencies are visible and accountable to the citizens.

- The shape and functions of regional government have been influenced by tensions between Portland and the other cities, service districts, and counties in the Portland area. The careers of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, Columbia Regional Association of Governments, and Metro have all been affected by distrust of the power and influence of the city of Portland.

- A related issue has been the proper form of representation within metropolitan agencies. The MPC, CRAG, and the original MSD followed the "council of governments" model in which general purpose governments and elected officials are directly represented. Metro follows a constituent model in which citizens are directly represented by an elected Council and Executive Director.

- In historical perspective, the 1950s and 1960s can be viewed as a prelude to a burst of institutional innovation in the decade from 1969 to 1978. The last twelve years have been devoted to implementing, testing, and fine tuning the organizations created in the 1970s.

I. THE INTRODUCTION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING

The roots of Metro as a regional planning agency reach back at least to 1925, when the state of Oregon created a committee to study the problems of local government in the Portland area. The automobile, said thoughtful citizens, was allowing rapid and unplanned suburbanization that was outrunning both the provision of services and the pace of annexation to Portland. Their 1926 report recommended legislation to facilitate the consolidation of Portland and Multnomah County, a suggestion that the Legislative Assembly proceeded to ignore.

The recovery of the national economy at the end of the 1930s and Portland's extraordinary war boom from 1940 to 1945 revived concern about the chaotic development of the "rural fringe." The Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, a New Deal planning agency active in the 1930s and early 1940s, worried about the costs of haphazard sprawl. Portland Commissioner William Bowes and city planners Harry Freeman and Arthur McVoy described overplatting and leapfrogging subdivisions as problems that were inevitably raising longterm costs of public services. In the first direct reference to the need for a new regional agency, the 1944 conference of the League of Oregon Cities resolved that "sporadic, scattered, and unregulated growth of municipalities and urban fringes has caused tremendous waste in money and resources" and called for legislation to allow "the creation of metropolitan or regional planning districts and the establishment of metropolitan or regional planning commissions."

The state's initial response in the postwar years was to authorize county planning commissions and county zoning to complement municipal planning powers. The 1947 legislation followed a report by a Governor's Committee on Rural Planning and Zoning. The three Portland area counties created planning

commissions between 1950 and 1955. Multnomah County adopted an interim zoning code in 1953, followed by Clackamas County in 1956 and then by Washington County in 1958, after several previous rejections by the voters.

The findings and recommendations of the Joint Legislative Interim Committee on Local Government in November, 1956, summarized the status of thinking on metropolitan issues as Oregon took a quick breath between the explosive growth of the 1940s and the boom years of the 1960s and 1970s. The Committee focused its attention on the traditional tools of annexation, service districts, and planning. In addition, it raised the idea of "urban area councils" in which local governments could meet together to discuss common problems--a predecessor of the Council of Governments model for metropolitan planning and services. In its final recommendation, it also asked for further study of a "metropolitan government" that might administer services and functions of area-wide concern.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission (1957-66) and the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Transportation Study (1959-67) were the first explicitly regional agencies in the Portland area. Each was a specific and limited response to the problems that had been elbowing their way onto the public agenda over the previous decade. Their "ancestral" relationship to Metro is shown in Figure 1. Their place in the chronology of all of Portland's regional agencies is given in Figure 2.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) was established by local agreement in 1957 to receive and use federal funds made available for regional planning under Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954. Since the legislature in 1955 authorized the State Board of Higher Education to accept and administer 701 grants, the University of Oregon's Bureau of Governmental Research and Service took the lead. Multnomah County's planning director Lloyd Anderson moved to Eugene to develop the structure, write the operating agreements, and secure local

acceptance for the new MPC during 1956 and 1957. The four-member board of the new agency represented the city of Portland and the three surrounding counties, which presumably looked after the needs of their suburban municipalities.

Under its first director Robert Keith, the MPC was a research organization more than a planning agency. It filled unmet needs for information with reports on population and industrial sites and furnished services to local planning departments rather than preparing its own long-range plans. It used the $540,000 in federal funds that it received from 1959 through 1966 to compile the first areawide base maps, gather land-use data, and make population projections. It inventoried the supply of commercial, industrial, and recreational land and projected future needs. Its research activities were a necessary first step toward more proactive metropolitan area planning. As an agency that was responsible to the four largest local governments in the Portland area, it also provided a forum where politicians such as Portland's William Bowes, Multnomah County's M. James Gleason, and Washington County's Clayton Nyberg could meet to discuss regional issues.

The Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Transportation Study (PVMTS) soon followed the MPC. It was initiated in 1959 by the Oregon State Highway Commission to do areawide highway planning in compliance with federal government requirements. PVMTS brought together the three counties, Portland, a dozen other cities, the Port of Portland, and the MPC. Clark County and the state of Washington were informal participants. Decisions were made by a Coordinating Committee with the advice of a Technical Advisory Committee. PVMTS employed its own staff early on, but came to rely on consultants and state highway employees. It came under the wing of the new Columbia Regional Association of Governments (CRAG) in August 1967 [see sections 2 and 5 for more on CRAG]. Reports under the "signature" of PVMTS continued to appear into the early 1970s.

II. CRISIS IN METROPOLITAN SERVICES

In the early 1960s, an increasingly determined group of Portlanders began to argue that the stopgaps and studies of the previous decade had failed to deal with the problems of public services in the metropolitan area. The signs were obvious to anyone who read the newspaper. Between 1941 and 1951, the number of special districts in the three-county area had increased from 28 to 89. From 1951 to 1961, the number of districts for fire, water, zoning, sewers, parks, and lighting exploded from 89 to 218, helping to make Oregon seventh in the nation in the number of special districts.

At the same time, area residents were engaged in a battle between annexation and the incorporation of new cities. The 1957-58 recession and the revelation by the 1960 census that the city's population was in gradual decline spurred Portland Mayor Terry Schrunk to launch a vigorous annexation campaign. Although a series of reports by the city argued that outlying areas could receive improved services with minimal tax increases if they joined with Portland, few suburbanites signed up. Northern Clackamas County rejected annexation by three to one in 1962. Residents of eastern Washington County incorporated the city of Tigard in 1961 to fend off an ambitious Portland. Other incorporations between 1961 and 1967 included North Plains, Happy Valley, King City, Durham, and Maywood Park.

The first clear voice in favor of a regional solution that spanned the entire metropolitan community was that of the League of Women Voters. A Tale of Three Counties, which the League issued in 1960, introduced the twin concerns for efficiency and accountability. The League found poor quality suburban services, "wasteful, fragmented and uneven urban services," and "fragmented local government." Many of its members joined with interested professionals and a scattering

of business persons to organize Metropolitan Area Perspectives (MAP) in January 1961. Conceived as a permanent "good government" organization, MAP's initial agenda was to push for a professional study of metropolitan problems and organization.

Important figures in the Portland business community also raised voices of concern. The Chamber of Commerce went on record in favor of exploring regional options for government services. Early activists also recall that business leaders such as John Gray and Donald Frisbee helped to organize a meeting to discuss the regional issues that would be faced in the new decade. Such efforts represented a new generation of leaders comparable to the business and professional men who had initiated Portland area planning by bringing John Olmsted and Edward Bennett to Portland a half-century earlier.

The 1961 legislature responded with an Interim Committee on Local Government Problems. The Interim Committee chair was Edward Whelan of Multnomah County and members included Edward Fadeley and Robert Straub. Its primary recommendation for the 1963 Legislative Assembly was the creation of a "metropolitan study commission" for the Portland area. The result was the legislative establishment and funding of the Portland Metropolitan Study Commission (PMSC) which functioned from 1963 to 1971 and whose efforts substantially transformed the structure of government in the Portland area.

The preamble of the Act creating the PMSC asserted that the growth of urban and suburban populations had created problems of water supply, sewage disposal, transportation, parks, police and fire protection, air pollution, planning, and zoning that "extend beyond the individual units and local government and cannot adequately be met by such individual units." The legislation allowed each of the 38 legislators representing Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington, and Columbia counties to appoint one member of the Commission. Their charge was to prepare "a comprehensive plan for the furnishing of such metropolitan services as . . . desirable in the

metropolitan area." In the process, they were expected to consider the full range of governmental structures from intergovernmental agreements to annexation to city-county or city-city consolidation.

The PMSC devoted its first two years to research and analysis in a systematic effort to define regional problems, regional issues, and levels of public support for regional solutions. Seven subcommittees examined different services to define their potential regional aspects, using criteria published by the national Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. Staff director A. McKay Rich coordinated studies by the University of Oregon, Portland State College, and private consultants on local government structure, finance, and services. The studies remain valuable sources of information on the Portland area.

The Commission's Interim Report in December 1966 made ten recommendations which effectively set the agenda for regional government over the next decade and a half:

1. Adoption of a charter for a greater municipality.
2. Special district consolidations where possible.
3. Legislation enabling the establishment of metropolitan service districts.
4. Legislation providing for review of proposed. changes in boundaries
5. Legislation permitting the consolidation and dissolution of park and recreation districts.
6. Provisions for the condensation and revision of special district statutes.
7. Legislation amending the state law on municipal consolidations.
8. Formation of a regional council of governments with memberships from counties, cities, and port districts.
9. Organization of an area-wide air quality control program.

10 Development of intergovernmental cooperative agreements among cities and counties for the services of health, planning, law enforcement and engineering.

The PMSC's initial focus was its recommendation for a "greater municipality for the Portland Urban Area." This supercity was to cover the entire urbanized territory of the three counties. Its component communities were to retain their identities and fine tune their mix of services through elected councils. The PMSC drafted a charter for such a federated municipality but failed to convince the 1967 legislature, which refused the necessary amendment to the statute on local government consolidation.

Facing significant opposition in Salem and concerned that municipal consolidation would be a hard sell, the PMSC in the later 1960s turned to a "marketbasket" approach of incremental changes. It helped to consolidate the Portland and Multnomah County health departments into a single county agency in 1968. It promoted the successful combination of four fire districts in eastern Multnomah County. It also assisted in the creation of a regional air quality program through intergovernment contract in 1966. The four-county program (including Columbia County) evolved into the Columbia-Willamette Air Pollution Authority in 1968 before absorption into the new state Department of Environmental Quality in the early 1970s.

Another and more visible product of the PMSC was the Columbia Region Association of Governments (CRAG). Lacking direct representation, the fast-growing suburban cities in the Portland area had long felt that the four-member board of the Metropolitan Planning Commission gave a cold shoulder to their interests. The PMSC began to work for a more inclusive council of governments in 1965, citing the success of the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments in the Salem area. The PMSC initiated discussions in 1965 and appointed a

committee to draft bylaws for an expanded regional planning agency early in 1966. Its groundwork paid off in 1966 when the Department of Housing and Urban Development required every metro area in the country to establish a "Metropolitan Planning Organization" that directly represented general purpose governments with at least 90 percent of the area population. The PMSC offered neutral ground where local officials could meet to agree on the structure for a new CRAG. With threat of federal cutoff of planning and infrastructure dollars, even a reluctant Washington County signed on in October, 1966.

Like the Metropolitan Planning Commission, CRAG was structured as a council of governments which represented the areas cities and counties. All of the participating counties and cities were represented in CRAG's General Assembly. The Executive Board, which met on a more frequent basis, copied the MPC with three county representatives, a Portland representative, and three representatives for the other cities in the three counties. E. G. Kyle of Tigard served as the first chair and David Eccles of Multnomah County as the first vice-chair, guiding CRAG through the relatively easy absorption of the staff and projects of the old MPC.

The climax of the PMSC's work came in 1969-70 as part of a burst of concern for planning and environmental protection throughout the state of Oregon. In Salem, mounting concern about maintaining the quality of Oregon's environment brought the state bottle recycling bill, legislation reaffirming the public ownership of Pacific beaches, and planning for a Willamette Greenway. The state's Sanitary Authority changed into a more ambitious Department of Environmental Quality in 1969. In the same year, Senate Bill 10 required Oregon cities and counties to engage in comprehensive land use planning, laying the foundation for the land use planning system that was detailed in Senate Bill 100 in 1973.

The same years also gave Portland an essential set of new government institutions to meet regional needs. The list

included the establishment of the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District (1969), consolidation of the Portland Commission of Public Docks with the Port of Portland (1970), establishment of a Unified Sewerage Agency for Washington County (1970), creation of the Portland Metropolitan Area Local Government Boundary Commission (1969), and establishment of the Metropolitan Service District (1970). The first three actions had their own long histories in city and county politics. The Boundary Commission and the Metropolitan Service District were the direct climax of the work of the PMSC. Along with CRAG, they set the terms for the evolution of regional planning and services in the 1970s.

III. THE PORTLAND METROPOLITAN AREA LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION

The Portland Metropolitan Area Local Government Boundary Commission has the longest name and the simplest history of the regional agencies that belong to the class of 1969-70. The idea of a state agency that could review and arbitrate annexations, incorporations, and other changes in local government boundaries first appeared in the 1956 report of the Interim Committee on Local Government, which had done little with the idea except call for further study. That analysis came from the PMSC in 1965. The work of its Review Board Committee constituted the preliminary draft used by Representative Robert Packwood and other sponsors of a boundary review bill in the 1967 legislature.

After the legislation stalled in 1967, the PMSC drafted a new bill for the 1969 Legislative Assembly. The PMSC draft was modified and adopted by the Interim Committee on Local Government, further modified during the legislative process, and passed in 1969. In their overlapping roles of PMSC members and legislators, Frank Roberts and Hugh McGilvra helped to carry the bill from stage to stage. The PMSC bill had the support of the League of Oregon Cities and the Association of Oregon Counties. It also drew on the expertise of Portland State University professor Ronald Cease, who had previously been staff director to the Alaska Local Boundary Commission. The key decision in the 1969 legislature was to preclude elected officials from serving on Boundary Commissions (there-by rejecting the idea that CRAG and councils of government elsewhere in the state might also function as boundary commissions).

The Portland Metropolitan Area Local Government Boundary Commission went into operation on July 1, 1969 in office space shared with CRAG. Until 1988 its members were appointed by the governor and had the authority to approve or disapprove

both "major" boundary changes (formation, merger, consolidation, dissolution) and "minor" boundary changes (annexations and withdrawals) of cities and eight types of special districts. In operation, the Boundary Commission has become a major force in implementing land use planning by testing boundary changes against plans for land development and the provision of public services. Since 1988 the commission members have been appointed by Metro.

IV. THE METROPOLITAN SERVICE DISTRICT: 1970-78

The most important proposal contained in the PMSC's market-basket was the multi-purpose Metropolitan Service District (MSD). It was intended to be the a governmental "box" which could hold as many service responsibilities as voters or the legislature were willing to assign. Depending on regional politics, it had the potential to be either a shell or a powerful operating agency.

Legislative authorization was very much caught up in Salem politics. A MSD bill failed to pass the House in 1967. Two years later, the proposal came back to the legislature at same time as a bill to create Tri-Met, a measure desperately needed to prevent the imminent disappearance of Portland's bus service with the threatened bankruptcy of Rose City Transit Company. Senator Donald Husband of Eugene, who had opposed a Portland area supercity, was now a convert to the idea of a comprehensive regional service district. According to one recollection, he "held Tri-Met hostage" to assure the authorization of MSD.

Legislative authorization paved the way for two appeals to the voters in 1970. Legal objections and general foot dragging by the city of Portland postponed a vote on establishing the MSD from November 1969 to May 1970. What The Oregonian characterized as Portland's "implacable opposition" was based on long range fears that a strong MSD might eventually assume control of the Bull Run water system and otherwise supplant Portland as a de facto provider of regional services. In the spring election, the strongest voices in favor of MSD came from Multnomah County Commissioner David Eccles, from good government groups like the City Club and League of Women Voters, and from business groups such as the Home Builders Association and Chamber of Commerce. On May 26, MSD passed by a margin of 95,753 to 82,400, with a large majority in Multnomah County offsetting negative results in Washington and

Clackamas counties. In November 1970, however, the voters overwhelmingly rejected a tax base, leaving the new agency with a wide range of challenges and few resources.

The new MSD drew its seven member board from local elected officials--one from Portland, one from each of three counties, and one representing the other cities in each county. There was substantial overlap between CRAG and MSD board members. MSD also borrowed staff from CRAG in its early years. Lacking a property tax base, its first substantive venture into solid waste planning was funded by a loan from DEQ and a small tax on used tires. Solid waste planning also had the potential to again put MSD crosswise with the city of Portland, whose St. Johns landfill had evolved into a regional service by default.

Another specific point of conflict between MSD and Portland city officials was Tri-Met. One result of the legislative politics in 1969 had been a "marriage clause" that allowed MSD to take over operation of the new Tri-Met. Dislike of Tri-Met's regional payroll tax made such a takeover attractive to some residents of Washington and Clackamas counties. Portland, in contrast, vehemently opposed a Tri-Met/MSD merger when the idea surfaced in 1970-71, for its single vote on the MSD board did not reflect the overwhelming importance of public transit for the central city. The combination of Portland opposition and the failure of MSD's tax base effectively stopped talk of the merger.

MSD did not add a second function to its solid waste planning until 1976, when Portland transferred the Washington Park Zoo. The zoo was an obvious regional facility which drew more visitors from outside the city limits than inside. It also needed an infusion of capital. Portland agreed to transfer the zoo if MSD could secure passage of a five-year levy. As often the case, voters proved more willing to pay for a specific service than to accept a general expansion of the local tax base. Good management has since made the zoo one of the most successful of the area's discretionary services.

V. THE PROS AND CONS OF CRAG: 1966-78

Like the fledgling MSD, the Columbia Region Association of Governments was also an agency that was caught in the middle. As its membership expanded from the original four counties and fourteen cities to five counties and thirty-one cities, CRAG emerged as an agency with neither the authority nor the supportive consensus to deal with regional issues.

The agency's constitution described it as a "permanent forum" and listed its basic functions as studying, reporting, recommending, rendering technical assistance, and adopting comprehensive metropolitan plans. Although CRAG continued the tradition of the MPC with solid background studies and reports, its efforts to develop a comprehensive land use plan ran aground on intergovernmental rivalries. Its first effort in 1970 followed the requirement of the CRAG General Assembly that it recognize the comprehensive plans of member agencies. The result was roundly criticized as a cut-and-paste effort that compiled existing plans without measuring them against genuine regional goals. When a redirected staff came up with a new Columbia-Willamette Region Comprehensive Plan: Discussion Draft (1974), however, member cities and counties thought that the plan went too far and too fast in subordinating specific interests to a grand regional scheme cooked up by CRAG bureaucrats. The result was a return to the drafting table to prepare a more general set of CRAG Goals and Objectives (1976) and a broad Framework Plan.

The difficulty in building consensus around a regional plan reflected a fundamental tension in using the council of governments model to develop regional policies. Most of the suburban delegates to CRAG were part time mayors and city council members whose time was already stretched between their careers and the responsibilities of their local office. Few had the time and energy for consistent involvement in the development of CRAG policies. Decisions came slowly when

delegates needed to consult with their fellow council members or county commissioners. In addition, they were often torn between the imperatives of regional issues and the need to protect their own community from unwanted costs, programs, or development limitations.

CRAG suffered a second problem of unstable funding. About two-thirds of the CRAG budget in the later 1960s and early 1970s came from federal grants for law enforcement, human services, and services for the aging. Most such money, however, was earmarked for specific programs or intended to be passed through to operating agencies. CRAG depended on contracts with its member jurisdictions for its overhead and operating budget. Since members could withdraw or threaten to do so, CRAG's regional planners could ill afford to permanently alienate constituent governments.

The 1973 legislature responded to some of CRAG's problems with Senate Bill 769, which officially created the Columbia Region Planning District. It made CRAG membership mandatory rather than voluntary for the three urbanized counties and their cities. The new CRAG replaced the old in April 1974, making Portland one of three metro areas in the country with a mandated council of governments (the others being Atlanta and Minneapolis-St. Paul). The new structure allowed associate membership to the states of Oregon and Washington, Tri-Met, the Port of Portland, and additional cities and counties adjacent to the Portland area such as Camas and St. Helens. Funding continued to come from dues apportioned by the population of CRAG members.

However, the measure also exacerbated suburban worries about the dominant role of Portland. Portland Mayor Neil Goldschmidt (1972-79) mobilized a highly expert staff in city planning and development offices and used their expertise to help set the CRAG agenda. The reallocation of federal transportation funds freed up by the deprogramming of the Mount Hood Freeway followed a Portland agenda. Senate Bill 769

confirmed a special role for Portland by weighting voting in the CRAG General Assembly by population. Portland gained roughly a quarter of the votes and a powerful position for defining regional goals.

In the mid-1970s, CRAG remained an agency in trouble despite the competence of its professional staff. Some of its "good government" constituents were distracted in 1973 and 1974 by the impressively unsuccessful effort to consolidate Portland and Multnomah County. The Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group (1973) and the Portland City Club (1974) called for greater public involvement and citizen input into CRAG decisions. The Oregonian (July 5, 1974) commented that CRAG was "still a stranger to the people it serves." Two years later, CRAG had to fight off death by ballot measure when a Eugene-based "Committee to Restore Local Control of Land Planning" unexpectedly placed on the ballot a measure to abolish all councils of government in general and CRAG in specific. The measure failed but the fear remained that the effective and hard-won consensus on regional coordination and services of the 1960s was slowly unraveling in the piecemeal implementation in the 1970s.

VI. THE TRI-COUNTY STUDY AND THE NEW METRO

The vehicle by which the friends of regional government responded to the problems of MSD and CRAG was a case of serendipity. In 1975 the former staff director for the PMSC, A. McKay Rich, saw a flyer from the National Academy for Public Administration announcing a national competition for 18-month grants to study the possibilities of multi-level government in metropolitan areas. Rich brought together an informal group to pursue a grant application. Key figures were Ron Cease, journalist Jerry Tippens, Beaverton's city manager Larry Sprecher, and Boundary Commission director Don Carlson. The grant application was submitted through the Boundary Commission as an identifiable local entity.

The National Academy program, which used funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, had been disappointed by the results of previous grants to Rochester and Tampa Bay. Seattle and Denver were the front runners in the second round before the arrival of Portland's application. After a site visit by the National Academy, however, Portland edged out Seattle. Points in its favor were the strength of Portland's neighborhood associations and the existence of functioning regional agencies on which a study could build.

The National Academy's $100,000 grant required a $50,000 local match. Portland State University, CRAG, and the Boundary Commission made substantial in-kind contributions of office space and support services. Local governments came up with cash contributions ranging from $100 to $5000. Portland General Electric, First National Bank, and Tektronix led the list of corporate contributors. In November and December, 1975, the "Ad Hoc Two-Tiered Planning Committee," the formal recipient of the grant, transformed itself into the Tri-County Local Government Commission. In turn, the core group of Commission organizers recruited 65 members representing a range of civic and business associations and sections of the

metropolitan area. A number of members had previous experience on the PMSC, including executive committee members Frank Roberts, Hugh McGilvra, Estes Snedecor, and Robert Simpson. Ron Cease became the chairman, Carl Halvorson vice-chairman, and A. McKay Rich the staff director.

The National Academy of Public Administration had hoped that the Portland study would devote equal attention to metro-wide institutions and to the empowerment of neighborhood groups as alternatives to traditional city and county governments. In fact, the Tri-County Commission was unable to develop a consensus on whether and how to transform neighborhood groups into public corporate entities. Instead, it devoted most of its effort to the more practical issue of "designing an upper tier system of government that will attend to the common needs of the entire Tri-County community." After a first round of committee work, the Commission set aside "the problems of city-county relations, special districts, and the neighborhood movement" for later consideration. In fact, these secondary issues kept drifting further and further back on the agenda as the Commission centered in on drafting specific legislation for the 1977 Legislative Assembly.

The Commission made a series of key decisions in the middle months of 1976. These decisions became part of a formal proposal to reorganize and reconstitute the Metropolitan Service District.

(a) The Commission decided that regional government could most readily be strengthened by combining the planning functions of CRAG with the regional service functions of MSD. It agreed early on that MSD was the proper foundation on which to build. Its legal status was firmly fixed by statute and by popular approval in 1970. It had also aroused less antagonism than CRAG.

(b) The Commission also decided in its early deliberations to favor the direct election of regional policy makers. It took very seriously the complaint that local officials who also serve at the area-wide level are forced to walk an impossibly narrow line between regional solutions and the demands of the local community that they were elected to represent. Direct election of a regional governing body was proposed as "the best, and perhaps only, way to secure a democratic, responsive, responsible and effective area-wide government."

In arguing for a directly elected metropolitan government, the Commission drew an analogy from earlier American history. The CRAG and MSD boards of the mid-1970s were similar to the ineffectual national Congress under the Articles of Confederation of 1778-89. Congressional delegates under the Articles represented states rather than citizens. The failure of the Articles had led to the adoption of the federal Constitution, under which the members of Congress directly represent the individual citizens. Direct election of an MSD Council was presented as a similar sort of forward-looking reform.

(c) The Commission preferred a relatively large number of councilors to be elected from relatively small districts, settling on 15 in the proposal submitted to the legislature. One practical consequence was to make the districts smaller than State Senate districts, reducing the perceived threat to incumbents. Districts were to coincide with historic and traditional communities rather than adhering to current political boundaries. It was hoped that voters would come to perceive each MSD Council district as a natural community of interest.

(d) The Commission initially split on the question of an appointed vs. elected executive. The two city managers on the Commission advocated strongly for the latter. They successfully argued that an appointed official (a "super city manager") would lack the political base to stand up to the Mayor of Portland and other visible politicians. Again, the Commission drew on the American constitutional experience, declaring that "separating the legislative and executive powers with corresponding checks and balances is in keeping with the American system of distinguishing between the policy-makers who flesh out and adopt the laws and the chief executive who proposes and enforces laws. . . . A hired chief-administrator, lacking both a political base and a direct line of accountability to the citizens, simply could not survive in a unit the size of the revised Metropolitan Service District."

(e) The Commission preserved MSD's statutory authority to absorb Tri-Met. However, the Port of Portland, the other large agency that operates on a regional scale, elicited sharper debate. Many Commission members argued that its distinct mission made it a poor match with an agency that would be furnishing services directly to citizens. Nevertheless, the Port was included in the Commission's list of services that the new MSD might assume.

In essence, the goal of the Tri-County Commission was to create a strong regional agency comparable to the Twin Cities (Minnesota) Metropolitan Council while adding the factor of direct elections. It therefore proposed that the Metropolitan Service District be reconstituted with a council elected from districts, an elected executive officer, and many of the planning functions previously exercised by CRAG (although not

its authority to prepare a comprehensive regional land use plan). On October 5, 1976, the Oregon Journal thought that the promised end of nonelected government was "right on target." The editors of The Oregonian, on December 15, agreed with the Commission's call for "an elected, truly accountable regional government."

Between the introduction of the Commission's legislative package by the Interim Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and its passage in June, 1977, the legislature made a number of changes. The size of the Council was cut from 15 to 12. A proposed veto for the executive director was eliminated. Representatives Glenn Otto and Mike Ragsdale made sure that the geographic coverage of the MSD was reduced from the entire three-county region to a smaller territory roughly matching the region's urbanized area. At the instigation of Mayor Goldschmidt, the legislature also required that MSD obtain approval of a tax base before taking on the metropolitan aspects of a long roster of regional functions including water supply, human services, regional parks, cultural and sports facilities, correctional facilities, and libraries. The Port of Portland was explicitly dropped from the list of agencies that the new MSD could absorb.

The Senate also required that the reorganization go to the voters in May 1978. Although Measure 6 passed by 20,000 votes, the result is hard to interpret as a mandate for regional government. There was little in the way of an organized campaign in favor of Measure 6 and essentially no organized opposition. The measure could legitimately be supported both by advocates and by opponents of metropolitan government. Rural voters outside the shrunken boundaries could have voted for Measure 6 in order to remove themselves from the jurisdiction of CRAG and the old MSD. The wording of the ballot measure -- "Reorganize Metropolitan Service District, Abolish CRAG" -- was confusing. Voters may have backed the measure expecting to rid the area of metropolitan

planning agency rather than create a more powerful one. Passage with nearly 55 percent of the vote was a surprise even to supporters. Most of the margin of victory came from Multnomah County, with a slight favorable edge in Washington County. Clackamas County rejected the measure by 2000 votes and its county commission unsuccessfully asked the courts to remove the county from the jurisdiction of the new MSD.

VII. METRO AT WORK

The reconstituted Metropolitan Service District (Metro) opened for business on January 1, 1979. As Metro officials and staff learned their job over the next half decade, the agency experienced the slow start and missteps that are associated with the classic model of a learning curve. With the exceptions of Mike Burton and Corky Kirkpatrick, the other members of the first Metro Council had held no previous elected offices. They had to learn to be politicians at the same time that they learned about Metro. Rick Gustafson, the first Executive Director, had experience as a legislator but not as a manager. Neither the Council nor the Executive was certain how to define their uncertain relationship, which had been left open by the legislation. They might have chosen to function as a large city council and city manager, with the council operating by consensus and relying on Gustafson to supply information, set agendas, and offer recommendations. In contrast, the Council might also have chosen to function as a miniature legislature which set its own policies and initiated its own programs for the Executive Director to carry out. Over the past decade, the Council has in fact moved gradually from the first model toward the second.

By 1982, Metro had made three major mistakes. The first was an overambitious plan to deal with flooding problems in the Johnson Creek watershed. Metro's plan for a basin-wide Local Improvement District to fund flood control measures was technically sound and fiscally creative. It was also politically unacceptable. Residents on higher land on the upsides of the basin were outraged to discover that they were expected to pay assessments to help property owners on the valley floor. Arguments that their paved streets, driveways, and parking lots increased runoff and directly contributed to flooding were scientifically correct but politically irrelevant. Metro was forced to beat an embarrassing retreat

in 1981, rescinding its LID ordinance and leaving the Johnson Creek plan abandoned by the wayside. Largely out of inexperience, its elected leadership had failed in the basic political task of judging the temper of their constituents.

Metro's first venture into a new area of direct service provision was also blocked by the voters of Clackamas County. As part of its solid waste management program, Metro developed plans to build a garbage transfer station and trash-to-energy plant in Oregon City. Although the transfer station opened in 1983, the trash burner aroused fears of toxic air pollution. In six separate measures, residents of Clackamas County, West Linn, Gladstone, and Oregon City voted in 1982 to protect their local airshed by forbidding the trash-to-energy facility. Metro stopped work on the energy facility rather than fight the issue through the courts.

Metro's third black eye in the early 1980s was the discovery of substantial flaws in its internal financial accounting. Newspaper headlines in 1981 about the "loss" of $600,000 did little to help internal morale or external reputation. Although internal management controls were strengthened in 1982 and 1983, Metro's accounting problems contributed to the defeat of two requests for a property tax base in the early 1980s. The upshot was to leave Metro dependent on federal grants, user fees, and a small per capita assessment on the cities and counties within its boundaries.

Metro's recovery can actually be traced through the entire decade of its operations. In 1979 the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission accepted the Portland area Urban Growth Boundary drawn up by Metro. The Washington Park Zoo grew steadily in visitors and national reputation. The solid waste department took over operation of the St. Johns landfill in 1981 and opened the Clackamas County transfer station in 1983. Selection of the Wildwood site in northwestern Multnomah County for a new landfill generated widespread opposition. The Multnomah County Commission then

blocked the site by disapproving the necessary zoning change. In response, Metro identified and implemented an alternative landfill site in Gilliam County which went into operation in January 1990.

Another success has been JPACT--the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation. CRAG, with its direct representation of cities and counties, had met the federal requirement that local general purpose governments participate directly in regional transportation planning. The new Metro, however, did not meet the federal definition of a Metropolitan Planning Organization. The response to meet federal requirements was to create JPACT early in 1979 as an ad hoc council of governments. JPACT is a forum in which elected officials from local cities and counties and representatives of transportation agencies make key decisions on regional transportation policy. These decisions have included the reallocation of roughly $200 million made available by the cancellation of the Mount Hood Freeway as well as basic transit and highway plans under Metro's functional planning authority. JPACT is staffed by Metro's transportation planning department. The Metro Council has seldom exercised its power to reject JPACT recommendations, preferring to work toward common agreement. The result of this double approval process has been a remarkable regional consensus on priorities for transportation projects to meet regional needs.

Another Metro success has been the siting, construction, and operation of the Oregon Convention Center. Metro was given the lead in convention center planning and coordinated the site selection process. Compared with acrimonious political controversies over convention center siting in cities such as Seattle, Denver, and San Francisco, Portland proceeded with remarkable public harmony. In November 1986, voters in the three county area approved a $65 million bond measure authorizing Metro to construct the center by a margin of 183,000 to 159,000. In effect, the vote guaranteed the

existence of Metro or a direct successor agency for the next twenty-five years. Metro then established a Metropolitan xposition-Recreation Commission (MERC) in 1987 to build and operate the convention center and other regional trade and spectator facilities. MERC operates with relative independence, although subject to general budgetary and administrative review by the Metro Council. Use of a commission to carry out executive responsibilities in a specific service area, as authorized in the legislation that constituted Metro, offered substantial flexibility to the organization. Utilization of the technique in 1987 marked another step in Metro's growth.

New initiatives involve planning to protect the Portland area environment. Since November 1990, Metro has been responsible for implementing the Natural Resources Management Plan for Smith and Bybee lakes in north Portland. The Metropolitan Greenspaces program is developing a plan for the protection of open spaces and natural areas on the basis of a systematic inventory of natural sites and lands. The resulting plan promises to be a sophisticated updating of CRAG's 1970 open space plan. In addition, Metro has used its review of the Urban Growth Boundary in 1989 to involve hundreds of citizens in developing land use goals and objectives for the metropolitan area.

The later 1980s also saw Metro mature as an organization in other ways. Rena Cusma, Metro's second Executive Director, took office in 1987 with new ideas about the internal separation of powers. She has been concerned to clearly define the powers and responsibilities of Executive and Council. The legislature responded in 1987 by restoring the Executive veto power that had been part of the original proposal from the Tri-County Commission. The same legislative session also brought the Boundary Commission closer to Metro by shifting the appointment of the commissioners from the Governor to the Metro Executive Director, who picks from names submitted by the Metro Councilors.

In partial response, the Council has attempted to define its own powers and prerogatives. Councilor Mike Ragsdale pushed the Council toward a legislative model with an articulated committee structure, "legislative" staff, and independent policy initiatives. Seats on the Metro Council are increasingly the objects of political contests. Councilors from outlying districts in particular have increasing visibility as community and political leaders. In the 1990s, Metro may well move toward the initial expectation that a Council seat would be the political equal of a seat in the Oregon House of Representatives.

Arguments over Metro's structure, management, and funding also prompted the legislature to establish a Task Force on Metropolitan Regional Government to examine Metro's governance, existing regional functions, and potential regional functions in 1987-88. Senator Glenn Otto, a veteran of metropolitan government politics, chaired the Task Force. Members included four citizens, a county commissioner from each county, and a legislator from each county. The Task Force reaffirmed the idea of an elected executive. It supported legislation (previously vetoed in 1985) that now allows Metro to collect an excise tax on its operations to fund central administration and planning. The Task Force also originated the November 1990 ballot measure which amended the Oregon constitution to allow Metro to have its own home rule charter.

VII. THE FOURTH WAVE: RENEWED INTEREST IN METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT

It is possible to identify four "generations" of interest in improved regional planning and service delivery in the Portland area.

The first wave of concern followed the extraordinary growth of World War II. It resulted in county planning and the Legislative Interim Committee of 1956.

The second wave began to mount at the start of the 1960s with work by the League of Women Voters and Metropolitan Area Perspectives and crested with the Portland Metropolitan Study Commission. It changed the structure of regional government with CRAG, MSD, the Boundary Commission, Tri-Met, and an areawide Port of Portland.

The third wave brought the Tri-County Local Government Commission and the creation of a new and expanded Metro.

The fourth wave dates from the City Club's 1986 "Report on Regional Government in the Portland Metropolitan Area." Although the City Club rejected the augmentation of Metro in favor of a consolidated "Willamette County" that would absorb Metro, Tri-Met and the three area counties, its report reintroduced the question of expanded regional government as a legitimate topic of public discussion. The Portland Civic Index project, an areawide strategic planning effort in 1989, focused additional attention on regional issues and problems. Passage of Measure 5 in November 1990 has stirred further discussion of regional coordination and regional services as possible responses to reduced property tax revenues. A number of area politicians as well as The Oregonian have kept regional government at the top of the public agenda.

By national standards, Metro's history is a success story. Its growth has been incremental rather than "revolutionary," accomplished with the slow addition of new planning and service responsibilities over the last quarter century. Its visible

achievements since 1986 have generated increasing public recognition, with new programs like the Metropolitan Greenspaces program attracting new constituencies to supplement the traditional good government advocates. At the same time, however, it is important to give credit to the citizens, public officials, and staff who worked to make the Metropolitan Planning Commission, CRAG, and MSD into effective agencies that provided the foundation for the Metro of the 1990s.

SOURCES

This history of Metro is based on a wide range of interviews, published reports, and records of study committees. We are grateful to the following persons who shared their experiences in a series of interviews in April 1991: Lloyd Anderson, Don Carlson, Ron Cease, Elaine Cogan, Rena Cusma, Rick Gustafson, Carl Halvorson, Corky Kirkpatrick, Ken Martin, Mike Ragsdale, A. McKay Rich, and Robert G. Simpson. In addition, we drew on interviews with Robert Baldwin, Robert Keith, Denton Kent, and Wes Myllenbeck that were conducted as background for Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth Century City, published in 1983.

Basic documents included legislative interim committee reports from 1956 and 1961; the 1966 and 1970 reports of the Portland Metropolitan Study Commission; the minutes, proceedings and reports of the Tri-County Study Committee (1975-77); and minutes and reports of the Task Force on Metropolitan Regional Government (1987-88). A number of special research monographs were prepared for the PMSC by the Portland State College Urban Studies Center, by the University of Oregon Bureau of Government Research and Service, and by private consultants.

The story for the 1950s and 1960s was reconstructed with the help of manuscript collections at the Oregon Historical Society. In partivcular, the papers of Terry Schrunk, Ormond Bean, William Bowes, David Eccles, and Don Clark contain materials on efforts at city-county cooperation and on the organization and internal dynamics of the MPC and CRAG. These materials were supplemented by Metro's annual reports; by research reports of the League of Women Voters, OSPIRG, and the City Club of Portland; by the files of The Oregonian and Oregon Journal and by several scholarly articles and papers.

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APPENDIX A

Membership on Key Regional Government Study Commissions

Portland Metropolitan Study Commission

George E. Lewis (Chair, 1964-65)
Estes Snedecor, Jr (Chair, 1966)
Robert G. Simpson (Chair, 1967-70)
A. McKay Rich (Executive Secretary)
Orval Etter (Legal Consultant)

Nina Aylsworth
Richard A. Braman
William Carnese
Lee Coiteux
Mary A. Duncanson
Howard L. Glazer
John Goss
Ruth Hagenstein
Dale M. Harlan
Donald C. Huffman
Donald L. Kalberer
Loren Kramer
Loyal C. Lang
Hugh McGilvra
Walter Merrill
John D. Phillips
Robert Recken
Leanor Silvernale
Jerry Violette
Hubert A. Walter
Edward Winter

Donald G. Balmer
W. Orren Brownson
Phillip A. Cogswell
Wrex Cruse
Mercedes Deiz
James M. Gleason
Margeret Gribskov
Orville F. Hand
J. C. Hicks
Francis J. Ivancie
Noah L. Krall
Alden F. Krieg
Dorothy McCullough Lee
Janet McLennan
Robert H. Orr
Wallace S. Priestley
Frank. L. Roberts
Pat Vessello
Jane Wallace
Harry Williams

Tri-County Local Government Commission

Ronald Cease (Chair)
Carl Halvorson (Vice Chair)
A. McKay Rich (Staff Director)

John Bailey
Marlene Bayless
Philip R. Bogue
Alan Brickley
Albert Bullier, Sr.
Ted Clarno
John Frewing
William Gregory
Hazel G. Hays
Nancy Hoover
Leland Johnson
Charles Jordan

Herb Ballin
Mary-Elizabeth Blunt
Ilo Bonyhadi
Dennis Buchanan
Joy Burgess
Elsa Coleman
Dean Gisvold
Lloyd Hammel
Stephen B. Herrell
Barbara Jaeger
Martin Johnson
Hugh Kalani

Tri-County Local Government Commission (continued)

Julie Keller
Loyal Lang
Ed Lindquist
Raymond Maier
G. H. Mattersdorf
Maria McCracken
Douglas Montgomery
Gary Nees
John Nightingale
Mary Rieke
Edward Rosenbaum
Betty Schedeen
Mildred Schwab
Mike Sheperd
Estes Snedecor
Marlene Stahl
Donna Stuhr
Ora Faye Thorgerson
William B. Webber
Roger W. Yost
Corky Kirkpatrick
Robert Landauer
Harold Linstone
Tom Marsh
Wanda Mays
Hugh McGilvra
William Moshofsky
Jack Nelson
Mary Opray
Frank Roberts
Fred Russell
Robert Schumacher
Virginia Seidel
Robert Simpson
Larry Sprecher
Ardis Stevenson
Steve Telfer
Jerry Tippens
Julie Williamson

Task Force on Metropolitan Regional Government

Glenn Otto (Chair)
John Houser (Administrator)
Ron Cease
Judie Hammerstad
Gretchen Kafoury
Ned Look
Ed Whelan
Jeannette Hamby
Bonnie Hays
Ed Lindquist
Richard Steinfeld
Don Williams

Figure 1

The Metro Family Tree

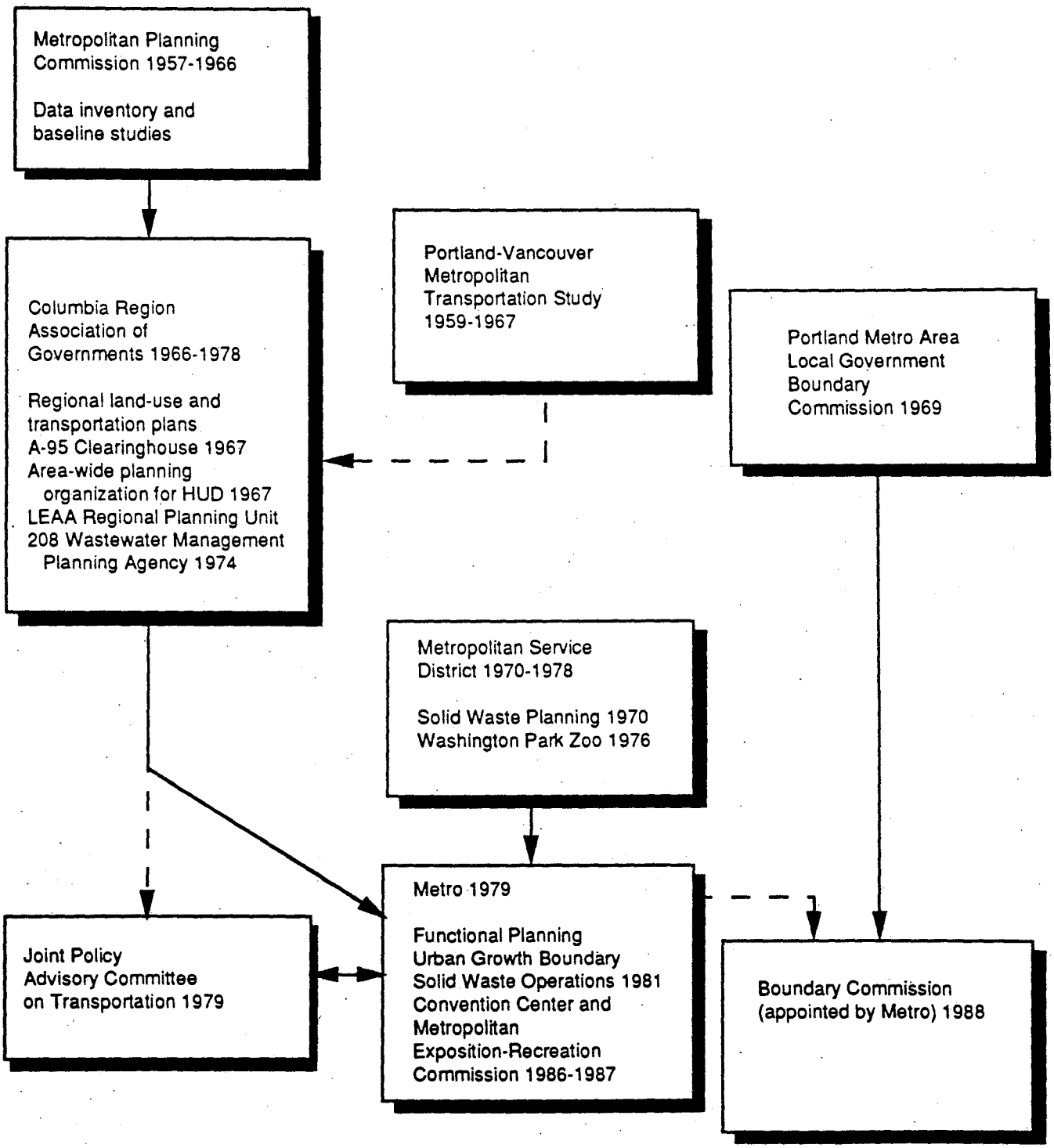
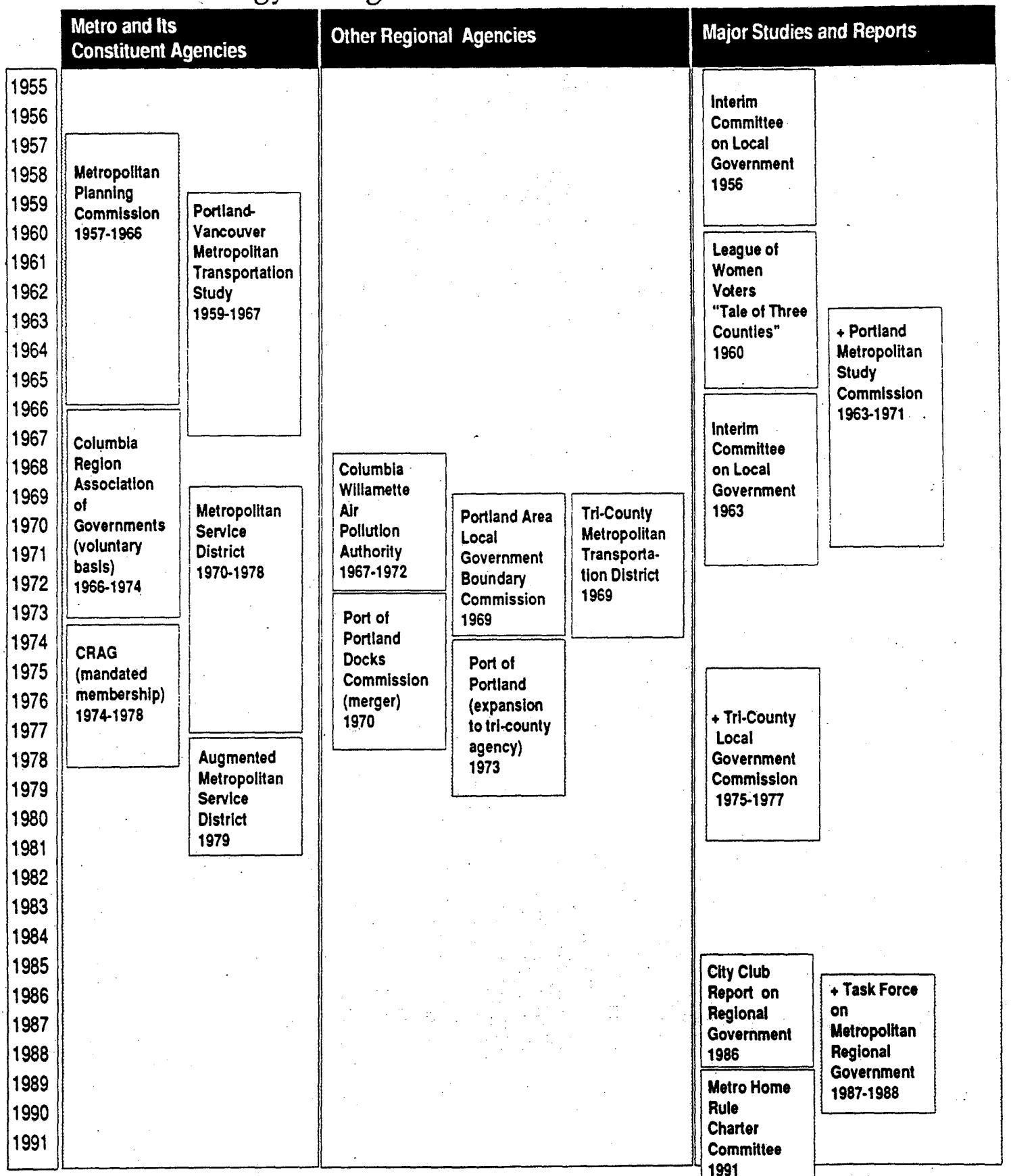


Figure 2

The Chronology of Regional Government in the Portland Area



+ See membership rosters, Appendix A