

DOUGLAS N. SCHNEIDER, DIRECTOR
Department of Transportation
District of Columbia
1975-1982

In September 1974, Mayor Walter E. Washington sent a reorganization plan to the Council of the District of Columbia to create a Department of Transportation. The Council had 60 days after submission of the plan to enact a resolution of disapproval. Such action was not forthcoming, and the plan became effective. Schneider, who was involved for over a year in the planning of the new department, had been appointed acting director in July 1974 and was subsequently confirmed by the Council as the first director of the department.

In 1979, newly elected Mayor Marion Barry reappointed Schneider as director of the department. When Schneider submitted his resignation in August 1980, Mayor Barry accepted "with reluctance." After five years as director, Schneider said he was leaving to seek "a change to a new environment and a different working environment." In a statement issued by the Mayor, Barry had high praise for Schneider:

"Doug Schneider has brought to his position a sincere and strong commitment to provide for the changing transportation needs of all District residents. He has consistently improved the management of virtually every aspect of our transportation service program. I am sorry to lose him, but I feel he is leaving behind a department which is operating well and which is continuing to improve itself."

Schneider's resignation cleared the way for Mayor Barry to begin implementing a plan for a "super department" which would include the Department of Transportation. Such a department had been under study for six months by a District government task force chaired by Carroll B. Harvey, director of the D. C. Department of General Services. Transportation programs and services under the plan would become, by 1983, part of a new Department of Public Works.

Director Schneider presided over a Department of Transportation responsible for transit planning, street and highway construction and maintenance, the licensing of motor vehicles, the promulgation of traffic regulations and parking enforcement. His accomplishments included becoming the first transportation department director in the Country to successfully divert federal highway funds for rapid-rail public transit construction. Schneider was able to redirect nearly \$2 billion in funds available for freeways and other road building projects in the District of Columbia.

Schneider opposed the introduction of right turn on red until he was forced to accept it by federal mandate. He then proceeded to act to protect the safety of pedestrians in an urban traffic environment by posting "No Turn on Red" signs at four out of five signalled intersections in the District.

Ever a supporter of public transit over car commuting, Schneider was one of the first transportation directors in the Nation to reserve curb lanes on major routes for buses. He also vigorously advocated low fares on public transit, contending that low rates were necessary to compete with automobile commuters whom he once described as "over-privileged, over-subsidized and over-pampered."

During his administration, Schneider infuriated suburban commuters by returning 13th Street, NW to two-way traffic. It had become a one-way rush hour freeway, according to residents, and Schneider justified his action at the time by observing that "our streets really belong to our neighborhoods."

An aggressive policy of parking enforcement was initiated during Schneider's tenure. The "Denver Boot" was introduced to force parking scofflaws to pay past due fines and obey parking regulations.

During his tenure as transportation director, Schneider commuted by bus to his office from his Glover Park home. He encouraged President Jimmy Carter to revoke the subsidy for federal workers parking in downtown Washington. President Ronald Reagan restored the subsidy in 1981.

After leaving District government service, Schneider became a transportation consultant. In 1986, he moved to Denver to head the transportation division of that city's department of public works. In Denver he bought a car, after many years of not owning one.

A native of Lincoln, Nebraska, Schneider was born in 1932. He moved to the District in 1958 after receiving a BA in Political Science from Johns Hopkins University and a law degree from the University of Michigan. Prior to his District government service, Schneider was a staff attorney with the U. S. Department of Transportation and had been executive director of the Washington Metropolitan Transit Commission.

In 1987, Schneider moved to Bellevue, Washington, where he continued his career as a transportation consultant. He died in Bellevue on January 29, 1991.