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1775 Massachusetts Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20036-2103
Tel: 202-797-6000 Fax: 202-797-6004
www.brookings.edu

American Planning Association
2007 National Planning Conference

The Road to 2010:
Plans for the 2010 Census and the American Community Survey

Opening Remarks

Andrew Reamer, Fellow
Metropolitan Policy Program
The Brookings Institution

Philadelphia Convention Center
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
April 15, 2007

Good afternoon. I'm Andrew Reamer, with the Federal Data Project at the Metropolitan Policy Program of the Brookings Institution. The goal of the project is to see that public and private decision-makers get the federal statistics they need to do their jobs. To this end, we periodically facilitate conversations between federal data producers and data users, and this session is part of that effort.

I will argue that from the perspective of the planning profession, the Decennial Census and the American Community Survey are the two most important federal statistical efforts. As most of you know, the long form traditionally received by one in six households has been lifted out of the Decennial Census and transformed, with some modifications, into the continuously collected ACS.

Planners rely on decennial population and housing estimates and long form-type data to make decisions across every realm of public policy – including land use, housing, transportation, economic and workforce development, education, public safety, emergency preparedness, and health care. Planners also recognize that federal funds across hundreds of programs are geographically allocated on the basis of these figures. In addition, we understand that businesses, from the largest to the smallest, use these data to decide whether to open an establishment, if so, where to locate it, and what products and services to sell.

Finally, we all know that local representation in Congress is based upon the numbers produced by the Decennial Census. If you live in Utah, which in 2000 missed getting an extra seat in the House of Representatives by less than 1,000 residents, you know this very well.

We are at a critical moment with regards to these two statistical programs. The 2010 Census will be collected in 35 months and two weeks. The planning process for the 2010 Census is well underway and this process has important roles and substantial implications for local and state planners. I am pleased we have with us today Jay Waite, Deputy Director of the Census Bureau, to walk us through how we will be getting from here to 2010. Jay is well equipped to give us this guided tour – he managed Census 2000.

The ACS also is at a crucial moment in its young history. Last year, the Census Bureau released its first full scale ACS dataset, for calendar year 2005, but for households only and for areas of 65,000 or more. This year, we will see a 2006 dataset for the total population, including group quarters. Next year, we will see ACS data for areas of 20,000 or more in the form of a three-year average. While the ACS data elements are very much like the traditional long form, the ACS data products are quite different and there's much that planners will need to get used to. To help us understand where the ACS goes from here and the implications for planners, we are pleased to have Susan Schechter, head of the ACS Office at Census and recently of the OMB Statistical Policy Office.

Please welcome Jay Waite.