

Southeastern Geographer

Vol. XXXXI, No. 2, November 2001, pp. 246-258

CITIZEN REACTION TO A PROPOSED **TIME ZONE** BOUNDARY CHANGE IN **KENTUCKY**: JUXTAPOSING BOUNDARIES ON THE LAND / IN THE MIND

Stanley D. Brunn

Changes in **time zone** boundaries are rare but are the result of initiatives at local levels where businesses and employees have stronger linkages to counties and cities in a **time zone** other than their own. I investigate the October 2000 change in Wayne County, a rural county in southcentral Kentucky that petitioned the U.S. Department of Transportation to join the Eastern **Time Zone**.

Public meetings, letters and petitions demonstrated the divided sentiment regarding the change. Almost 70% of the 2500 signatures supported the change. I investigate the content of 660 individual letters to identify the major reasons supporting and opposing the change. Linkages to places of employment and shopping and visits to physicians were major reasons in support of the change.

Objections were a dissatisfaction with no referendum, concerns about children's safety waiting for buses in the dark, "liking it the way it is," and inconveniences for farmers.

Key words: **time** zones, community reactions, economy.

Every **time** when I cross the county line, I see the sign that says, "Entering Central **Time Zone**." This lets everyone entering Wayne County know that we are on a slower **time**. Right or wrong, the perceptions by many people is that we are slow in more ways than just **time**. That sign might just as well say "Entering 1949, Set Expectations Back 50 Years."

— Wayne County resident in support of the change to Eastern **Time**

The political map of the United States contains a vast array of boundary lines delimiting local jurisdictions, states, and administrative districts of the federal government. Among the federally administered spaces are those related to the movement of mail (ZIP code areas), immigration and naturalization activities, and interstate commerce. Many federal regions' boundaries, including **time** zones, are taken for granted; most Americans do not question their construction and whether they are a hindrance or boon to urban and rural economies and quality of life. The history of American **time** zones is traced to 1883 when the American railroads "carved up the continent into four **time** zones, in each of which all clocks would be set on exactly the same **time**" (Cronin, 1991, p. 79). This "carving up" provided some order to the standardization of **time** in broad areas of U.S. territory. The over-riding purpose was to eliminate confusion with multiple local or "sun" times and ease the flow of commerce moving across vast areas.

The consequences of delimiting **time** zones across the country meant that some

states would be in more than one **time zone** and some residents invariably would be living closer to the boundary than others. That is, some residents would be living “divided lives,” that is, working in one **zone**, living in another; or living in one and shopping and visiting friends in another. Those residents, companies, and institutions along or near **time-zone** boundaries are always aware of the “**time** on the other side,” a “side” that might include a place for work, evening television programs, athletic events, or religious services. Some would be living “two **time** lives.” The purpose of this study is to investigate the reactions for and against the change in **time zone** boundaries in Wayne County, **Kentucky**.

The subjects of **time**, **time** in people’s lives, and **time** and place, have long intrigued historians, anthropologists, and geographers. Historians have discussed the history of **time** zones and the 19th century railroad expansion in the heartland and the West (Corliss, 1941; Stover, 1961, pp. 157-158; Stilgoe, 1983; O’Malley, 1990; Cronin, 1991, pp. 79-81). Economic and urban geographers have written on **time** and the daily activities of individuals (Adams, 1995), the **time**-space bundles of those with different lifestyles, the diffusion of innovations (Hagerstrand, 1968), **time**-space and cost-space convergence (Brunn and Leinbach, 1991; Janelle 1991), **time** zones and major global financial centers (Hepworth, 1991; Langdale, 2000), the social history of medieval **time** (Thrift, 1996), and the meanings and mapping of electronic space (Wilson and Corey, 2000; Wilson and Arrowsmith, 2000). Political geographers Shelley et al. (1996, pp. 70-71) have discussed the political importance of the international Prime Meridian Conference on **Time** in Washington in 1884 and Brunn (1974, pp. 296-299) Michigan’s referendum in 1972 approving daylight savings **time** during the summer.

The U.S. government, under the Secretary of Transportation, assumed responsibility for **time-zone** boundaries and any changes under the Standard **Time** Act of 1918, which was amended by the Uniform **Time** Act of 1966. This agency has the authority to change the boundary in “regard for the convenience of commerce and existing junction points and division points of common carriers engaged in interstate or foreign commerce” (Federal Register, 1999). Because of the potentially serious economic and social problems that might result from boundary changes between or within states, they are seldom changed. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has approved only five changes in **time-zone** boundaries during the past 15 years (Shiple, 2000b), in Kansas, North Dakota, Indiana, and Nevada (Zuckerbrod, 2000). The DOT is concerned with the effects any boundary change would have on local and regional economies, especially transportation and communication.

Kentucky was among a number of states in the Middle West that adopted Central Standard **Time** in 1883, primarily at the urging of railroad companies. In 1961, Louisville and Lexington were moved from the Central to the Eastern **Time Zone** (Shiple, 2000a). The Wayne County change was the first considered since then. On Sunday 29 October 2000 at 2 a.m., when the nation went off of daylight savings **time**, the residents of Wayne County, a small rural county in southcentral **Kentucky**, did not gain an hour’s sleep, but rather quietly entered the Eastern **Time Zone** “while the rest of the nation [set] clocks back” (Phelps, 2000b, p. 8A). They went to sleep on Central Daylight **Time** and woke up on Eastern Standard **Time**. The switch meant that sunrise and sunset would be an hour later than in the surrounding counties on Central **Time** (Phelps, 2000a).

This change was the result of more than a year of study by the DOT, which held

hearings in Monticello, the county seat, hearings that generated much discussion. The proposal had its roots in a county in which many employees, shops, and government offices have stronger linkages to Eastern **Time Zone** counties and cities than to those on Central **Time**. Links to Somerset, Lexington, Frankfort, and Louisville are especially strong. In addition, Wayne County was the state's easternmost county in the Central **Time Zone** (Fig. 1).

The first public meeting on the proposed change occurred in December 1998 when the Wayne County Fiscal Court scheduled a hearing. The proposal was initiated by June Hall, a pawnshop owner who moved to Monticello from Somerset (in adjacent Pulaski County), who asked the magistrates in the fiscal court to petition the U.S. Department of Transportation for the county to enter the Eastern **Time Zone** (Phelps, 1998, p. 1A).

The magistrates were divided 2-2 regarding the change. In March 1999, the Wayne County Fiscal Court approved the change by a 3-2 vote, with the County's Judge Executive Bruce Ramsey casting the deciding vote in favor of the proposal (Phelps, 1999a, p. 1A). In April 1999 this highest governmental body in the county formally petitioned the U.S. Department of Transportation to change the county's **time-zone** designation from Central to the Eastern.

A formal public meeting on the change was held on 24 June 1999 when members from the DOT came to Monticello for a public hearing. About 75 people, both supporters and opponents, attended and stated their views (Phelps, 1999b; "Wayne Residents Debate," 1999; "Wayne Residents Push," 1999). Following this meeting, the DOT representatives stated they welcomed comments, written or electronic, by 20 August 1999. It was initially thought that any change would take place on 31 October 1999, when Daylight Savings **Time** ended (Federal Register, 1999). But because of divided community sentiment, an observation made by the Secretary of the Department of Transportation (Phelps, 2000b), the decision was delayed as the department sought additional information from residents (Phelps, 2000a). The understanding was that if any change was forthcoming it would be effective when Daylight Savings **Time** ended in late October 2000 (Fig. 2).

Wayne County, in southcentral **Kentucky**, abuts the Tennessee line and is two counties west of I-75. Monticello is economically tied to the Lake Cumberland recreation area nearby. The county's pace of life is described by many residents as slow; many refer to the county as being on "slow **time**." One resident remarked: "We're a laid-back little community. We're farmers, small businesses, people like that. We're not a progressive city The Eastern **time zone**; it's a faster pace"(Shipley, 2000a, p. A5).

During the 1998 and 1999 deliberations a number of county officials listed specific reasons for the change ("Wayne Residents Push," 1999, p. B2). They included: Most commuters, including students, go to the Eastern **Time Zone** (ETZ); Most local businesses are supplied by companies in the ETZ; Major daily newspapers ETZ;

Fig. 1. Location of Wayne County, **Kentucky**, in relation to the boundary between Eastern and Central **Time Zones** in **Kentucky** and Tennessee.

Most hospitals serving the area and the nearest police station are in the ETZ; and Wayne County is the only county in the 5th Congressional District in CTZ.

Crossing the **time zone** can bring confusion for residents and disrupt what might otherwise be considered regular activities (Shipley, 2000b). As reported in the Louisville Courier-Journal in July 1999, “And everyone has to do confusing mental gymnastics when making doctor’s appointments or restaurant operations at nearby places in the Eastern **time zone**” (“Wayne Residents Push,” 1999, p. B2). Or as a store clerk in Monticello remarked, “The worst thing about it is, if it’s 3:30, and you think of something you want to order and you call Louisville or Lexington, they’ve done shut down and gone for the day” (“Wayne Residents Push,” 1999, p. B2).

Fig. 2. Sign on State Highway 92 reflecting the recent change of Wayne County, **Kentucky**, to Eastern **Time**.

While the **time** change is a concern for some, for others it makes little difference in their daily lives. A retired school superintendent remarked: “I got a rooster up there, and he crows the same **time** no matter what **time** it is” (“Wayne Residents Push,” 1999, p. B2).

The final ruling was made on 17 August 2000 and cited in the Federal Register. It listed 16 reasons for changing Wayne County from the Central to the Eastern **Time Zone** (Federal Register, 2000). While there was some discussion about tabling the decision because of the split evidenced among residents, the Secretary of Transportation, Rodney Slater, acknowledged that this “would be a dereliction of our duty” (quoted in Tagami 2000, p. B1).

A key phrase in any change in the **time-zone** boundary is the “convenience of commerce,” a phrase that considers the movement of people and products across the boundary line. The specific wording of the U. S. Code, under the Uniform **Time** Act of 1918, states “that the standard for making a **time zone** boundary change is regard for the convenience of commerce and the existing junction points and division points of common carriers engaged in interstate or foreign commerce” (Federal Register, 2000, p. 50154). The DOT considers a variety of factors, including: Where do businesses get their supplies and ship them; Where do communities receive television and radio broadcasts; Where are the newspapers published that serve the community; Where do residents go for bus and rail service; Where is the nearest airport that serves the residents; What percentage of residents work outside the community where they reside; What are the major elements in the community’s economy; is it declining or improving; what are current economic development plans; What is the standard of **time** in places residents go for shopping, recreation, schooling, health care, and religious worship? (Federal Register, 2000, p. 50154).

METHODS. I used the website of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket Management System, Docket OST-1999-5843, which included scanned copies of 316 documents relating to the requested **time zone** change in Wayne County (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2000). There were 311 documents which contained letters, some with multiple letters; the remaining five entries included notices in the Federal Register about the proposal and the final ruling on 17 August 2000 regarding the boundary.

I read all letters for their content, noting especially the reasons “for” or “against” the **time-zone** change. Many of these were short, but some contained two or three pages of typed or hand-written messages for or against the change. Petition letters often contained no specific reasons, only signatures. I grouped the “for” and “against” reasons into major categories.

FINDINGS. Altogether there were 660 individual letters from residents of Wayne County received by the DOT; they were dated from 21 June to 19 November 1999. Of these letters, 444 were typed, 112 were handwritten, and the remaining 104 contained some handwritten comments on a typed petition letter. A number of letters had multiple signatures, often those of family members or friends. For example, one letter included 225 signatures, another 56, and another 45. A letter from June Hall of Hall’s Pawn Shop (Fig. 3) dated 6 July 1999 included the signatures of 1479 individuals on 29 pages. She and her husband had moved from adjacent Pulaski County several years before and initiated the petition drive to request that Wayne County be included in the Eastern **Time Zone**. The petition read: “Hal Rogers [congressional representative from the area] has agreed to help us fight the **time** change. Let’s move it back up and leave it there.”

In total, the DOT received 2543 signatures on letters and petitions; 1802, or 71%, were in favor of the change and 741, or 29%, were against it. It merits mention that 1479 of the 1802 signatures favoring the change, or 82%, were on the Hall petition.

Fig. 3. A major business in Monticello, **Kentucky**, where residents signed a petition in favor of Wayne County joining the Eastern **Time Zone**.

There were more than 50 different reasons given opposing the **time** change, and about one-half that number supporting it. The major reasons for the change were economic, that is, the major cities for shopping, employment, and entertainment were in the Eastern **Time Zone** (ETZ) (Table 1). Also the television stations watched were in this **zone**. The major metropolitan linkages were in the ETZ, specifically Knoxville, Lexington, and Cincinnati, and also Somerset, the county seat in nearby Pulaski County. Other reasons high on the list of those supporting the change were that Wayne County residents would then be working in a county in the same **time zone** as the one in which they lived, perceived benefits or progress would be brought to Wayne County, and residents would be in the same **time zone** as their physicians. Also “the system is broken and needs fixing,” “will benefit the tourist economies and especially those coming from eastern **time zone**,” “it will decrease confusion,” “I can take classes from Eastern [**Kentucky** University] now,” “I have children and grandchildren in this poverty stricken area and believe there is a possibility that this change will help them and their children earn a better wage and have a better life,” “our TV Guide comes on Eastern **time**,” and the “emergency weather bulletins are always written for Eastern **Time Zone** areas.” One person remarking on the strange way the state’s **time-zone** boundaries are delimited wrote that “one does not need to be a rocket scientist to see that there is a need to straighten out this line.”

TABLE I

MAJOR REASONS IN SUPPORT OF MOVING TO EASTERN **TIME ZONE**

Reasons

Frequencies

Majority of trade, shopping, entertainment in ETZ 78

Major metropolitan links to cities in ETZ 36

General support; no specific reasons 30

Destiny of county and progress at stake 29

Doctors in ETZ 26

Would reside and work in the same **time zone** 15

Would attract new businesses 13

Attend or will attend a college in ETZ 13

Agree with 16 reasons given by DOT 12

Source: Calculated by author from U. S. Department of Transportation, Docket Management System, Document Number OST-1999-5843, 2000.

The reasons for opposing the **time** change mostly pertained to personal, rather than community or regional, interests (Table 2). Highest on the list were those who expressed disapproval that no countywide vote was taken. Some opposed the change, but gave no reasons. Many opposed the change because they “liked it the way it is” or they included a statement to the effect that “the county has always been the way it is for a long **time**, so why change it.” Other reasons included concerns that those employed in counties still on Central **Time** would then be working in a **time zone** different from the one in which they reside; fears related to the safety of children getting on buses “in the dark”; and concerns that “schools would be starting too late” and babysitting and child care would have to be adjusted. A number of farmers opposed the change because it would be an inconvenience on their beginning work in the fields and on purchasing needed equipment at day’s end. A less important reason, but equally significant in the minds of some residents, was that the initial proposal was from a person living out-of-county; there was also some evidence of a genuine distrust of out-of-staters.

Others who opposed the change gave such reasons as “mail delivery would be delayed,” “would lose an extra hour of daylight for evening work outside,” “relatives would live in a different **time zone**,” “hay dries faster on Central **Time**,” “will cause adjustment in schedules of dairy farmers and cattle,” “going to work in the winter **time** with snowy roads in the morning.” A few also invoked religious reasons, including “the people are changing God’s **time** law,” “please don’t make the freedom of worship almost impossible, considering that dinner has to be served, homework completed, and baths have to be taken after returning from [Wednesday night] services.” One practical resident remarked that “it is going to cause confusion to everyone who works, goes to school, goes to church. Etc. You will have to change all the maps, atlases, telephone books, etc. Is it worth all that not to mention the expense?”

TABLE 2

MAJOR REASONS FOR OPPOSING MOVE TO EASTERN **TIME ZONE**

Reasons

Frequencies

Dissatisfied: No county referendum (note: 85 signed one letter) 101

Safety of children: In the dark, getting on the bus, etc. 59

“Like it the way it is” 52

Just against; “no reason given” 44

Schools would start later 34

Workers would live in Wayne County and work in another 20

Inconvenience of farmers 27

Day care services and babysitting affected 25

“County done OK the way it is for a long **time**” 20

“Outsiders” and a minority of Wayne Countians supporting it 18

Religious reasons: Can’t attend Wednesday evening services, etc. 12

Would negatively affect business 10

Businesses would have to change their schedules 9

Source: Calculated by author from U. S. Department of Transportation, Docket Management System, Docket Number OST-1999, 5843, 2000.

DISCUSSION. Wayne County residents were sharply divided regarding whether to support a change to Eastern Standard **Time**. A reading of the individual letters and petitions submitted to the DOT revealed personal and community reasons for the switch and against the proposal. The reasons supporting the change were mostly related to employment and to the ease in coordinating shopping and entertainment trips and in paying visits to physicians. A number of business owners felt the change would benefit their own operations, especially in placing and receiving orders. Being on the same **time** as Frankfort, the state capital, was also perceived as making governmental transactions easier. That many tourists come from the Eastern **Time Zone**, and especially Ohio and Tennessee, was thought to appeal to the county’s recreation and tourism industries.

The major reasons Wayne County residents opposed the change were of a personal nature. Three stand out in regard to the number of comments and signers of petitions. First was the absence of a countywide referendum. Second was the concern about children, and especially the image presented that they would be left in the dark waiting for school buses in the morning or returning from school in the dark in the evening—possibly an unfounded fear, since the county school superintendent had already informed residents that should the change be forthcoming, he would work with others on school-day hours to ensure that children would not have to wait in the dark. A third reason is tradition, that is, since the county had never been on Eastern **Time**, there was really no reason to switch. These residents were pleased with the way things had always been done, so why consider a change? Letters expressing these views seldom mentioned the problems of those working in Eastern **Time Zone** counties or those traveling there for shopping or for appointments with physicians. For some residents, the proposal did not seem to affect their lives. A reporter for the Lexington Herald-Leader, a major newspaper serving the county, wrote about one farmer in Wayne County who stated that “the worst problem he could see is everyone staying up an hour later and losing sleep to watch nighttime TV programs, such as Survivor or the news. Broadcast from Eastern **Time**, they come on an hour earlier in Central **Time**” (Tagami, 2000, p. B1).

The opinions expressed by many Wayne County residents and their leaders in reaching a decision are well expressed by Mr. Wade Upchurch, District 4 Magistrate, who in a 24 August 1999 letter to the DOT stated: I spent several hours and weeks studying the issue. I looked at all the various factors that were considered for changing a **time zone** for a county and whether we met the criteria for such a change, I gathered as much information as possible about how **time zone** alignment can affect the economy of a particular area. My research indicated that communities alignment related to **time zone** can affect its economic well-being. I made the motion to move Wayne County to the Eastern **Time zone** as a member of the fiscal court. I made this motion because I was convinced that it was in the long-term best interest of the people of

Wayne County. Today, I feel even stronger that it is in the best interests of future generations of Wayne County to move to the Eastern **Time zone**.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS. The residents of Wayne County spoke with a “divided voice” regarding the request to move to the Eastern **Time Zone** in October 2000. The division was apparent in public meetings held within the county and individual letters and petitions sent to the DOT. The “box score,” as tabulated by the signatures, indicated 70% supported the change.

Let me suggest four topics that are worthy of consideration by economic and social geographers interested in the politics of **time** and **time-space** geographies of communities and individuals. First would be to examine the sentiments of other counties requesting a change to move to a “faster,” or ahead-**time, zone** and those wishing to move to a “slower,” or behind-**time, zone**. In mid-2001, there were petitions pending in three counties in central and southern North Dakota (Mercer, Sioux, and Morton) that request a change from Mountain to Central **Time** (Petrie, 2001). Second would be to examine the individual **time-space** budgeting changes of affected workers, businesses, and services. The specific question would be to discern how lives have improved or worsened by being in a new **time zone**. A third topic would measure how much residential and business relocation takes place with a county or community moving to a new **time zone**.

This relocation question might apply not only to those in Wayne or similar counties that have moved to a new **time zone**, but also to adjacent counties that do not make the change. Fourth, there were discussions in mid-2001 about whether to manipulate **time** zones or daylight savings **time** in order to reduce energy shortages, an issue debated with reference to the Pacific **Time Zone** (Petrie, 2001; “More Daylight,” 2001).

By studying these individual and corporate geographies of **time-space** planning and budgeting among those living along **time-zone** boundaries, we will learn more about the impacts of these political boundaries on residents’ daily lives and in their minds.

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