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'Father of Metro' Carlton Sickles Dies at 82

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Carlton R. Sickles, 82, a former Maryland congressman, legislator and champion of the Metrorail transit system who was known to many as "the father of Metro," died in his sleep yesterday at his home in North Bethesda. He had congestive heart failure.

As a Democrat in the Maryland House of Delegates, Sickles served

in the mid-1950s on the planning and study commission that set the stage for the Metrorail system. For seven years after the 1967 creation of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, Sickles served on its board of directors from Prince George's County. Since 1981, he had been an alternate board member from Montgomery County. He attended his final Metro meeting last week.

"It's a terrific loss," said D.C.

Council member Jim Graham (D-Ward 1), who is the chairman of the Metro board.

In an interview last night, Graham called Sickles a pioneer and a man of vision who to a great degree embodied the history of the Metro system. He was "a gracious and intelligent man who believed deeply" in the role of mass transit—and the subway in particular—in the life of

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SICKLES, *From CI*

the Washington region, Graham said.

From 1963 to 1967, Sickles was Maryland's congressman at large. He left the House of Representatives in 1966 to seek the Democratic nomination for Maryland governor, losing in a three-way race to Baltimore paving contractor George P. Mahoney, a perennial office seeker. Mahoney based his candidacy on opposition to open housing legislation, and his campaign slogan, "Your Home is Your Castle. Protect it!" struck a responsive chord with Maryland's blue-collar white voters, many of whom resented the civil rights movement.

Mahoney won that nomination by about 1,600 votes out of more than 474,000 cast, but the primary battle left Maryland Democrats so divided that Republican Spiro T. Agnew captured the Maryland governorship. "Everybody blames me for Agnew," Sickles told *The Washington Post's* Douglas B. Feaver in 1978. "... that wasn't what we set out to do."

Sickles tried to return to the House of Representatives in 1968 but lost in the primary. "I regret having left Congress, because I enjoyed that," he said at the time.

During his years in Congress, Sickles supported a high-speed railroad between Washington and Boston, home rule for the District of Columbia, cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay, civil rights and Metro.

He was born in Hamden, Conn., where his father was a business manager for an asbestos workers union local, and he came to Washington as a boy when his father took a job with the international union. He graduated from Roosevelt High School and Georgetown University.

During World War II, he was an Army infantry officer in the China-Burma-India Theater of Operation. In China, he met his future wife, Simone Shornick, who was born in Outer Mongolia to Russian and Polish parents, and grew up in Shanghai. They were married in 1947. She died in 1990.

After the war, Sickles graduated from Georgetown University's law

school. He was recalled to active military duty in the Korean War and served in the office of special investigations of the Air Force.

In his professional career, Sickles was assistant general counsel for the United Mine Workers welfare and retirement fund. He later established his own legal practice and founded his own company, Carday Associates Inc., now located in Beltsville. The company administers employer health and pension funds. Sickles continued directing the operation until his death.

He moved to Langley Park, where he became president of the Democratic Club and in 1954 was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates. In 1955, he was appointed to the eight-member Joint Commission to Study Passenger Facilities and Services in the Washington Metropolitan Area, and he remained a member of the commission even after his election to Congress.

It was from this service that Sickles acquired the "father of Metro," designation, which was formally declared decades later in a proclama-

tion by Montgomery County executive Charles Gilchrist, setting aside Feb. 14, 1985, as "Carlton Sickles Day."

Metro historians generally give equal shares of Metro's paternity to Sickles, the late Virginia state senator Charles Fenwick (D-Arlington) and Robert E. McLaughlin, the District commissioner during the Eisenhower administration.

"If it means that I'm the guy who actually conceived of Metro—then I'd have to say no," Sickles said in 1978. "But if you're talking about a guy who has husbanded it through the early growing pains, I'm happy to take partial credit."

In 1996, Sickles married Jacqueline Eig, who survives at the couple's North Bethesda home. Survivors also include a daughter from his first marriage, Simone Rockstroh of Lisbon; a stepdaughter, Eden Eig Tassiello of Gaithersburg; seven grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Staff writer Martin Weil contributed to this report.