

BUSINESS MEN'S ASSOCIATION
OF LOS ANGELES

The PLAZA UNION TERMINAL PLAN

How Business Men, Property
Owners and Taxpayers
Regard North End
Union Depot
Project

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DOES
LOS
ANGELES
WANT
IT
?

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PURPOSES:

THE BUSINESS MEN'S ASSOCIATION

FAVORS AND ADVOCATES:

1. **ELIMINATION OF GRADE CROSSINGS**
By separation of street and interurban electric railway grades from steam railroad grades.
2. **IMPROVEMENT AND ACCELERATION OF INTERURBAN ELECTRIC RAILWAY SERVICE**
By removing all high-speed interurban electric cars from the streets, wherever practicable.
3. **IMPROVEMENT OF FREIGHT FACILITIES**
By separation of freight and passenger routes.
4. **UNIFICATION OF PASSENGER TERMINAL FACILITIES**
By means not involving the taxing or assessing of citizens of Los Angeles, or the unsettling of land or business values.

DISAPPROVES AND OPPOSES:

1. **OBLITERATION AND DESTRUCTION OF THE PLAZA**
(The historic center of Los Angeles) by its proposed conversion into a railroad yard.
2. **IMPOSITION UPON THE TAXPAYERS**
Of the cost of establishing a union passenger station, by bond issues, or assessments, in whole or in part.
3. **UNNECESSARY DISTURBANCE OF BUSINESS-PROPERTY VALUES**
By attempting sudden and drastic changes in business and traffic centers.
4. **THE LOCATION OF A UNION PASSENGER STATION IN "THE NECK OF THE BOTTLE"**
(And the corking of the neck by obstructing the northerly exits of Los Angeles, San Pedro and Alameda streets.)

History

The Business Men's Association of Los Angeles, whose purposes and executive personnel are set forth on the opposite page, was organized in 1917 by a group of business men interested in the city's growth and welfare, and particularly in the questions of grade crossing elimination, improvement of interurban service and unification of railroad facilities.

Under the leadership of Robert A. Rowan, as president, and Philip D. Wilson, as secretary, approximately three thousand (3,000) property owners and business men enrolled as members of the association.

It took part in the hearings held by the railroad commission on the railroad grade crossings and terminal questions in 1917, and at that time protested against the proposal then urged upon the commission to establish a union passenger station in that part of the city east of the Plaza known as Chinatown. That proposal has fortunately not been approved by the engineering department of the railroad commission.

The "Plaza" Union Terminal plan now recommended to the commission is different from that formerly proposed; but for the reasons given in this folder it is believed by the members of this association to be even more undesirable and impracticable than the original scheme for a Plaza terminal which seems to be now abandoned.

DOES
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The Plaza Terminal Plan

For several years there have been suggestions from time to time, principally by interested property owners, to the effect that a union passenger depot for all railroads entering the city should be built in the vicinity of the old Plaza, where Los Angeles first began.

This idea took definite and concrete form after a syndicate of San Francisco capitalists bought up what is known as Chinatown, on the east side of the Plaza, where it was proposed the station should be built.

WHAT IT PROPOSES

This plan now submitted to the railroad commission in substitution for the original scheme proposes to wipe out the present Plaza entirely, covering the site with railroad tracks, building the depot south of the Plaza, taking a strip of property about six hundred feet wide extending all the way from Commercial street north to Redondo street, a distance of nearly three-fourths of a mile, closing Los Angeles, San Pedro and Alameda streets, and severing the connections between Macy street and Alameda, Los Angeles and Main streets.

SHALL WE GIVE THE RAILROADS THE PLAZA?

This is the project which the State Railroad Commission is asked to endorse, and in aid of which it is proposed that the city shall give its historic public Plaza to the railroads, close the northern exit of three of its most important traffic arteries and incur a municipal bonded debt of millions of dollars.

What a Union Station Means

In this connection arises the question, "Does Los Angeles need or desire a union depot at all?"

The Municipal League Committee declares that for Los Angeles a joint passenger station is "not essential."

Investigations show that less than three per cent of the passengers coming into and going out of Los Angeles change from one railroad to another.

NOT NEEDED BY TRAVELERS

In other words, 97 out of every 100 passengers make Los Angeles a terminal. They stop here. They have no use for a union depot.

And it is obvious that the residents of Los Angeles would get no additional transportation facilities from a *joint* passenger station.

A QUESTION FOR YOU

Do the taxpayers of Los Angeles wish to issue bonds and spend millions of dollars for an accommodation to a few passengers who pass through Los Angeles without stopping, and from which the residents of the city themselves could receive no benefit?

The Engineer's Report

On the Union Terminal Problem

The investigation for the state railroad commission and its engineering department was conducted by Mr. Edward Sachse, chief engineer for the commission. Mr. Sachse considered three proposed sites, the Plaza, the Southern Pacific (usually known as the Arcade), and the Santa Fe depot site. His report, which is a large volume of nearly 600 pages, with many maps and illustrations, is conceded to be a valuable work in the presentation of material, but is criticised as to the conclusions reached.

"AESTHETIC POSSIBILITIES"

Mr. Sachse lays great stress on the aesthetic possibilities of a union station in Los Angeles, and chiefly on its score, and because of its "advertising value" to the city, he recommends that a union station be built at the Plaza site. He frankly declares that the establishment and location of a union passenger station is essentially a city matter rather than an engineering matter, and that the arguments in its favor are based on city planning, city pride, city advertising, and not from the railroad operating viewpoint the cost of a station as is proposed at the Plaza is not justifiable.

FOR TAXPAYERS TO DETERMINE

The Business Men's Association believes it is for the people of the city to say whether the aesthetic and advertising possibilities of a union station at the Plaza are worth the expenditure of millions of dollars by the taxpayers. This is not an engineering question or a railroad question; it is a question for the taxpayers of the city exclusively to decide.

How the Report Arrives at Its Conclusions

The report filed with the Railroad Commission makes a comparison of the three sites under consideration by listing the various factors considered important and then giving them an arbitrary relative importance.

For instance, aesthetic and architectural possibilities are assumed to be:

- 2 times as important as adaptability to grade crossing elimination;
- 2½ times as important as accessibility by street-car lines;
- 2½ times as important as convenience to hotel and business district;
- 7½ times as important as improvement in rapid transit.

Twenty-one factors or items are thus listed and rated.

Thus by giving a factor weight of 15 to the aesthetic and architectural possibilities, and a weight of only 2 to immediate improvement in rapid transit, purely arbitrary results are reached. The Plaza site is rated at 10 in aesthetic and architectural possibilities. This rating is multiplied by the factor weight, which gives 150 points to the Plaza site on the aesthetic and architectural score. The Arcade site is rated at only 4 in this respect, so it is credited with only 60 aesthetic points, although some people believe the Arcade site is quite as aesthetic as the Plaza, particularly when the original Plaza is wiped out.

COMPLICATED? SOMEWHAT!

On the other hand, the report admits that the Plaza site is useless for the immediate improvement of interurban transit, and the Arcade site is given a rating of 10 on this factor. But because the factor weight is scaled away down to 2, it gives the Arcade only 20 points. The Plaza site is given no points at all.

Thus the Plaza site is given a total of 150 points on these two factors, and the Arcade only 80 points. Suppose, however, the improvement of interurban transit is given the same importance as aesthetic possibilities (many people consider it more important) then we would have 210 points for the Arcade site, to 150 for the Plaza, even accepting the report's estimates of the aesthetic possibilities of the two sites.

REPORT IGNORES COST ELEMENT

It is by this intricate and arbitrary method that the report reaches the conclusion that the Plaza site is the best, but it *absolutely ignores the element of cost and the closing of important streets in its computation.*

It can easily be seen that by a slight shifting of the relative weights of various factors, or by including other important factors, the conclusion would be far different.

Elsewhere in the report it is stated that cost may be the controlling element in determining the terminal problem. Taking this into consideration, there is no doubt that the Plaza site would not be in the running.

The factor of cost must be given great weight in any consideration of this problem, for if the cost be prohibitive, all other factors go for naught.

Then, too, if the proposed site is so located that it will close a number of very important thoroughfares and cause such congestion that it would be impossible for vehicles to operate, this factor should be given great weight.

By this same method of computation, the report concludes that the Santa Fe site has fewer points in its favor than the Arcade site.

With the element of cost and closing of important streets taken into consideration, the Arcade site undoubtedly would score much higher than the Plaza, even using the arbitrary scale of values adopted in the engineer's report.

t the Plaza Plan Would Cost

site for the Plaza terminal would take between Main and San Pedro streets (e) north of Commercial street and a e width northerly to Redondo street, ters of a mile. This is the equivalent y city blocks. The southerly por- is covered with business blocks, and rtion with industrial plants.

COST OF LAND

estimates the cost of condemning the er with approaches for viaducts, etc., 25 with \$1,136,211 added for the im- e destroyed—a total of more than five and this for land alone.

STATION BUILDING

proper, Mr. Sachse estimates, would and the viaducts over the new tracks the other approaches would bring the y five million dollars.

make a total of approximately \$10,- site and station.

ly the beginning of the expense!

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

anges that would be made necessary inal at the Plaza will cost much more itself. These include new railroad o take the place of those which the ses to take for coach yards; rearrange- rban system and other changes.

SUBWAYS

recognizes the necessity of getting Pa- s off the surface of Main street, and subway from the Pacific Electric sta- d Main streets to the Plaza, and an m the Plaza east to a point across the of three-quarters of a mile.

The subway, he estimates, would cost \$3,880,816, and the elevated lines would cost \$1,671,590, a total of more than five and one-half millions.

BROADWAY SUB-TUNNEL

Mr. Sachse also realizes that a station at the Plaza would add greatly to the congestion on Main street, and he proposes to relieve this in a small measure by building a sub-tunnel for street cars under the present Broadway tunnel. This would add \$381,920 to the cost.

GRADE CROSSINGS

The cost of viaducts over the river—to do away with grade crossings—would be the same in the case of a union station at the Plaza as at any other site. Mr. Sachse puts the cost of new viaducts on North Main, Macy, First, Fourth, Seventh, and Ninth streets, at \$3,547,081.

TOTAL COST

There are still other elements to be considered. The Plaza plan contemplates taking the present Southern Pacific freight yards, which would require new freight yards at a cost of \$2,835,187. Then there would be new coach yards, a union freight station, the readjustment of tracks—all of which are contemplated in the Plaza plan, and Mr. Sachse puts the total cost at \$25,396,633.00.

His estimates, however, are based on costs in 1917. Conservative engineers have brought these estimates up to date and now place the cost at

\$45,000,000.00

These figures do not include the value of the rail- road land proposed to be used in the project, which Mr. Sachse places at \$28,050,691 additional, nor do they include the value of the historic old Plaza, which it is proposed to turn over to the railroads.

Will the City Pay For It?

On page 247 of the engineer's report it is stated: "In not a single instance of monumental passenger terminal construction in recent years can it be said that the cost of the station, considered from the rail- road operating point of view alone, is justifiable as a sustaining investment."

In other words, it will not pay the railroads to build a union station. Under the new railroad law the Interstate Commerce Commission undoubtedly would prohibit the railroads from making a non-paying investment.

How then is the proposed Plaza terminal to be paid for?

"LET GEORGE DO IT!"

The engineer's report proposes, on page 526, that the City of Los Angeles, and possibly the county, vote bonds in aid of the project, and that an assessment district be formed to take in all property in the neigh- borhood of the station.

This would undoubtedly run into the millions of dollars—just how much is not set forth. But the most conservative estimates show that the cost of a station at the Plaza would be at least ten million dol- lars more than would be a station at other available locations.

BUT WILL GEORGE DO IT?

The question then arises: Are the taxpayers and property owners willing to pay at least \$10,000,000 towards the cost of a union terminal at the Plaza?

In view of the many other demands for municipal improvements—a new city hall, a municipal auditor- ium, a new and sanitary jail, additional fire protection, further harbor improvement, more power development, and a number of other projects which are more im- portant than a union depot, it can safely be prophesied that the public is not ready to contribute millions of dollars towards the Plaza project.

How About a Subway?

It is necessary that the Pacific Electric interurban trains be removed from Main, Los Angeles, San Pedro, Seventh and Ninth streets.

This is essential both for the improvement of inter- urban service and to relieve those streets of the burden of that traffic.

HOW?

There are two ways to accomplish this: First (as proposed by the Pacific Electric Railway Company) by building an elevated from Sixth and Main street station to and across the river, and connecting with the private right-of-way of the Pacific Electric Railway near Aliso street east of the river, and also an elevated carrying the southern division of the interurban cars as far south as Fourteenth street. Permission to do this work at its own expense has been asked by the Railway company of the railroad commission.

THE PLAZA PLAN

Second: The method of removing interurban cars from these streets recommended by the engineering department of the railroad commission in connection with the establishment of the proposed union terminal at the Plaza is that the city should build a subway along Main street and turn it over to the Pacific Electric on a rental basis.

MORE BONDS

This subway would cost from four to six million dollars and would necessitate a bond issue for that amount.

Is the city willing to bond itself for from \$4,000,000 to \$6,000,000 for this purpose?

Furthermore, such a subway would necessarily have to go beneath the existing storm drains and sewers and it is probable that the tracks therein would have to be more than forty feet deep. In order to reach the surface passengers would have to come up a distance equal to climbing to the fourth floor of an office building.

Another point: If there is to be a union station, it should be so located that all interurban electric trains could reach it, if possible. Under the plan proposed, neither the Pacific Electric trains from the south nor from the west could possibly reach the station.

The Main street subway feature alone makes the Plaza plan impracticable and economically indefens- ible.

Years and Years of Delay

pressing transportation problems before at present are the improvement of inter- and the elimination of grade crossings, removal of trains from Alameda street.

As early as 1913, Charles K. Mohler, railway engineer, called for the Board of Public Utilities, called at-grade crossing evil and the desirability of removing Southern Pacific trains from Alameda street.

even years ago!

HAVE BEEN SOLVED YEARS AGO

As early as 1913, the railroads made application to the Board of Public Utilities for permission to put a project which would have solved these problems, but this application has been held up on account of the Plaza terminal project.

It is in that the railroad lines are unanimously in favor of the Plaza plan. It is very doubtful whether the railroads of Los Angeles would be willing to give up the Plaza plan. It is almost certain that the railroads would vote down any bond proposition for the removal of a railway station.

MORE DELAY INEVITABLE

It is quite evident that any attempt to carry out the Plaza plan upon the people of Los Angeles will result in endless delays, and probably with prohibition.

Elimination of the Plaza plan by the railroad would not give relief from our pressing transportation problems in the next ten or fifteen years.

LET'S GO!

Relief now. Before the Plaza station could be built in this city and the surrounding region will be a problem. That necessitates taking care of the needs of any people as we have at present—and the conditions demand immediate relief.

Los Angeles afford to wait another ten years perhaps longer, before anything is accomplished to improve interurban service or to remove the grade crossings?

Corking the "Neck

Here is a study that is of extreme importance to every person who has occasion to drive past the Plaza, and particularly to those who must come into the city by that route.

On the opposite page is a reproduction of page 300 of Mr. Sachse's report. It is a diagram showing traffic conditions around the Plaza at the time the report was made.

AN ILLUSTRATIVE CHART

It shows the number of vehicles and street cars per hour on the streets around the Plaza from 6 o'clock in the morning to 8 o'clock at night.

It shows an average of 301 vehicles per hour on Main street (not counting 160 street cars); 495 vehicles on Los Angeles street, and 225 on Alameda street. An average of 1021 vehicles per hour would be thrown into Main street.

SEVENTEEN VEHICLES PER MINUTE

But the Plaza plan contemplates closing Los Angeles, Alameda and San Pedro streets, which would throw all of the travel of those streets over into Main street. An average of 1021 vehicles per hour would be thrown into Main street.

Ten hundred and twenty-one vehicles per hour means 17 per minute.

Seventeen automobiles, trucks, wagons, every minute from 6 o'clock in the morning to 8 o'clock at night!

A physical impossibility!

of the Bottle"

IT CAN'T BE DONE

These figures average the traffic for the entire day, and during the rush hours they are much greater than the ones quoted. No one street could carry that traffic.

STREET CARS, TOO

Then there is an average of 160 street cars per hour on Main street, with a maximum of 243 during rush hours.

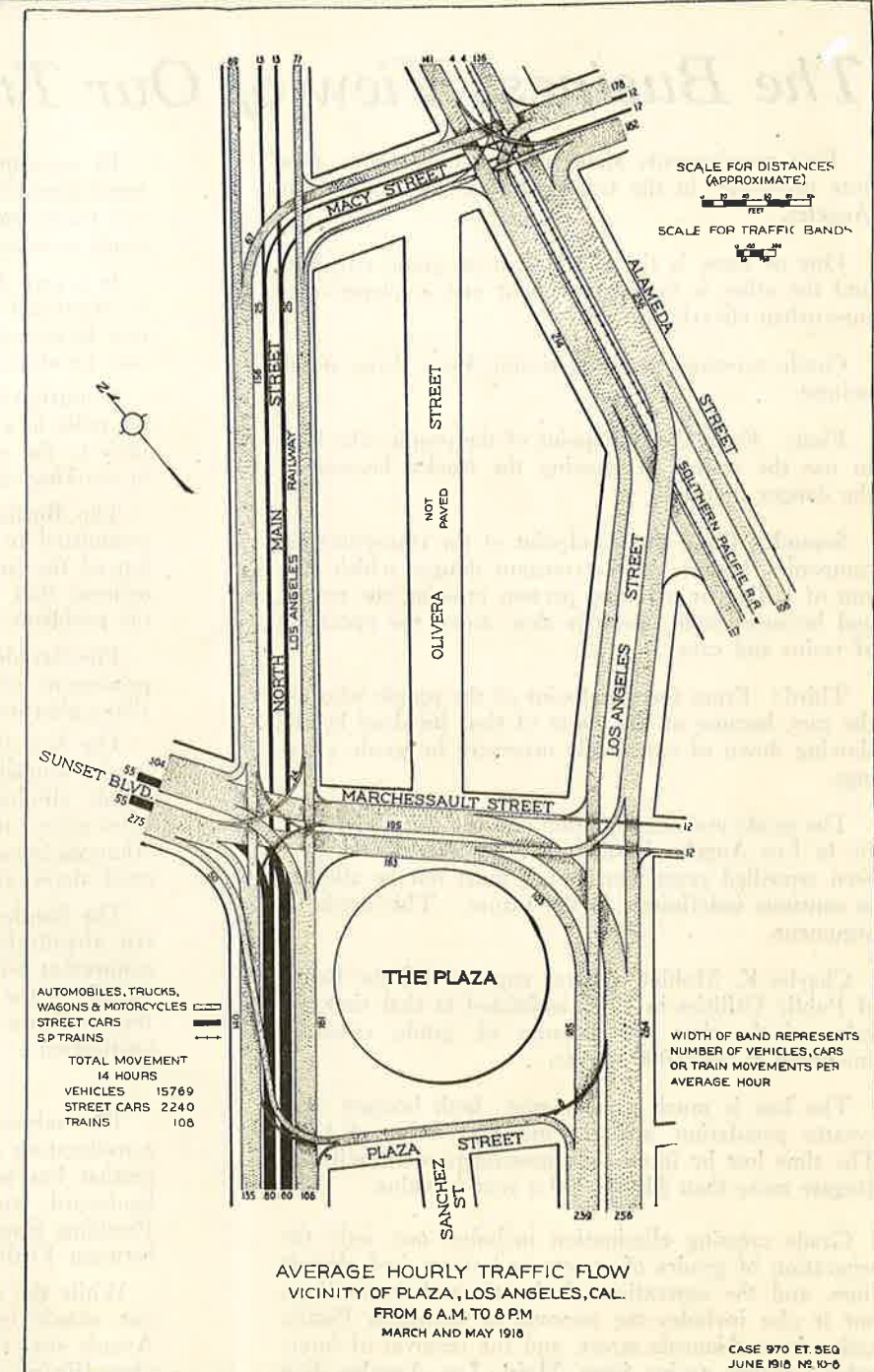
Mr. Sachse suggests diverting some of these through a sub-tunnel to be built in Broadway, but the bulk of the street car traffic would have to remain on Main street, and of course a union terminal there would vastly increase the congestion at that point.

In twenty years from now, when Los Angeles is a city of 1,500,000 to 2,000,000 people, what would be the result of such a condition?

UMBRELLA SHEDS, ALSO

Mr. Sachse suggests the possibility of making Main street thirty feet wider, but he also plans umbrella sheds and a subway station in the center of the street, which, with stopping street cars, would more than neutralize the benefit obtained by the additional width.

More outlets to the north should be provided instead of closing what we have.



California Railroad Commission Engineering Dept.
FIG. 103. TRAFFIC IN VICINITY OF THE PLAZA
This diagram illustrates the complexity of street traffic and the volume to be provided for in case of changes in the street plan. Note the relatively large volume on Los Angeles Street and on Sunset Boulevard due to Hollywood traffic, and that on Alameda Street made up of traffic of the Southern Pacific Freight Houses and of Macy Street.

The Business View of Our Traffic Problems

Two requirements stand out pre-eminent as absolute necessities in the transportation situation in Los Angeles.

One of these is the elimination of grade crossings, and the other is the improvement and acceleration of interurban electric service.

Grade crossings are undesirable from three standpoints:

First: From the standpoint of the people who have to use the streets in crossing the tracks, because of the danger involved.

Second: From the standpoint of the transportation companies, because of the constant danger which they run of killing or maiming persons crossing the tracks, and because grade crossings slow down the operation of trains and cars.

Third: From the standpoint of the people who use the cars, because of the waste of time involved by the slowing down of cars made necessary by grade crossings.

The grade crossing situation and the density of traffic in Los Angeles is such that the evil should have been remedied years ago, and it must not be allowed to continue indefinitely in the future. This needs no argument.

Charles K. Mohler, railway engineer for the Board of Public Utilities in 1913, estimated at that time the value of the time lost because of grade crossings amounted to \$600,000 a year.

The loss is much greater now, both because of a greater population, and the increased value of time. The time lost by interurban passengers alone will aggregate more than \$1,000,000 a year in value.

Grade crossing elimination includes not only the separation of grades of streets and steam and electric lines, and the separation of electric and steam lines, but it also includes the removal of Southern Pacific trains from Alameda street, and the removal of interurban electric trains from Main, Los Angeles, San Pedro, Aliso, Seventh and Ninth streets.

By accomplishing this result, improved and accelerated interurban service will be obtained. For if electric trains can run on their own right-of-way without grade crossings, they can make much better time.

It is very desirable that freight and passenger tracks be separated entirely, if possible, so that no delays may be occasioned to passenger trains, and that danger may be eliminated.

A unification of passenger terminal facilities also is desirable in a way, but it is not essential. It will add little to the convenience of travelers, but it might aid in working out other problems.

The Business Men's Association is not necessarily committed to any one plan for a passenger terminal, but of the sites that have been suggested thus far, it believes that the Plaza site is *least* adapted to solve the problems involved.

The Arcade plan will provide for the immediate improvement of interurban electric service, which the Plaza plan would make impossible.

The fact that the Arcade plan can be carried out in the immediate future also opens the way for the speedy elimination of grade crossings along Los Angeles river, and it would remove steam trains from Alameda street, and electric trains from the streets cited above, at once.

The Southern Pacific, Salt Lake and Pacific Electric already have worked out a plan of unification in connection with this site, and, as modified by Mr. Sachse, of the Railroad Commission, provision is made for the Santa Fe, should that line desire to join in the unification.

CITY PLANNING

The subject of City Planning is receiving much consideration at present, and in this connection a suggestion has been made for the opening of a broad boulevard, running easterly and westerly through Pershing Square and the business section of the city between Fifth and Sixth streets.

While the details of this idea remain to be worked out, should it be adopted it will lead directly to the Arcade site, furnishing an artery for the distribution of traffic incomparably superior to any suggestion made in connection with the Plaza site.