

# THE PLAZA SCHEME

---

A DISCUSSION OF THE PROPOSAL TO  
REMOVE TO THE PLAZA ALL  
PASSENGER TERMINAL  
STATIONS, BOTH  
STEAM AND  
ELECTRIC

---

Business Men's Association  
of Los Angeles

**Devoted to the Elimination of Railroad Grade Crossings,  
and the Encouragement of the Joint Use  
of Terminal Facilities**

## THE PLAZA SCHEME

The Business Men's Association of Los Angeles is an organization of business men of the City devoted to the elimination of railroad grade crossings and the encouragement of the joint use of terminal facilities. It desires to submit to the property holders and the business community of Los Angeles a brief discussion of the proposal to remove to the Plaza all passenger terminal stations, both steam and electric.

### PASSENGER STATIONS AND GRADE CROSSINGS

It must be kept clearly in mind that the establishment of a union passenger station at the Plaza would not cure, or even ameliorate the present dangerous conditions arising from existing grade crossings.

If the Plaza were made the terminus of all steam railroads, the number of freight and passenger train movements across streets on the Santa Fe would not be reduced, and the number of street crossing movements on the Salt Lake railroad would be increased; because both of those roads would necessarily continue to operate trains northerly and southerly along the river banks. The Southern Pacific passenger train movements across streets would be somewhat lessened in number, but its freight train movements would not, because of the necessity of maintaining present freight facilities south of Fifth Street.

Of all grade crossing movements, those of the electric high speed interurban cars are characterized by Mr. Arnold, the transportation expert, as the most dangerous. And so far as the electric interurban cars from the North, East and South are concerned, the proposition of having these cars make the Plaza their terminal point would not only be intolerably inconvenient to the traveling public, but would increase the burden upon our congested streets.

The Plaza union passenger station agitators seem oblivious of the fact that the elimination of grade crossings is the matter of first importance to the people of Los Angeles, and that the location of a union passenger terminal at the Plaza would leave the grade crossing problem unsolved. The abolition of grade crossings means the separation of railroad and street grades. This can only be accomplished by viaducts, elevated railroads or subways. The building of the most monumental depot that the imagination of architects and engineers could conceive would affect the grade crossing situation not at all. The union station agitation is utterly inconsequential to the settlement of the grade crossing question. Moreover, it not merely ignores, it is antagonistic to the plan recommended by Bion J. Arnold (and now submitted by the Pacific Electric Company to the Railroad Commission for its approval), which provides for an elevated structure from the rear of the Sixth and Main Street depot connecting with the Long Beach lines and to and across the river, free from grade crossings. The building of this elevated road (which the Plaza proponents are opposing) would remove all of the Long Beach, San Pedro, Newport, Riverside, Santa Ana, Pasadena, San Gabriel, Monrovia, Pomona and San Bernardino cars from the streets and place them entirely upon private rights of way.

It would greatly improve the service to all these points, and, without stops, **WOULD SHORTEN THE PASADENA RUNNING TIME TO TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES.**

This plan of Mr. Arnold's would give immediate relief from the most numerous and dangerous grade crossings. Instead of being opposed for selfish reasons it should by all means be approved and encouraged.

### LOS ANGELES NOT A WAY STATION

The principal value of a union passenger station is, of course, its convenience to through passengers. It makes no difference to the tourist who arrives in Los Angeles and stays over even one day whether or not the station from which he leaves is the same station at which he arrived. The depot trip is the same to him in either case. Nor is it of any importance to the traveler whether or not the station at which he arrives, or from which he departs, is used by other railroads than the one he is patronizing. **It is the through passenger who gets any and all of the benefit that a union passenger depot can confer.** Los Angeles is not a junction point or a way station. It is a terminal point for about ninety-nine per cent of the travelers who come to the city.

**Probably no city in the United States has less need for a union passenger station than Los Angeles.** No material benefit or advantage would be derived by the business community of this city from the establishment of a union passenger station, and to the resident of Los Angeles the location of two or three railroad passenger stations under one roof would be of no particular advantage. There are cities, whose names it would be invidious to mention, in which the traveler desires not to stop or pause on his journey, and in which even the time spent in changing cars is an annoyance. In such places the convenience of the traveling public calls for a union passenger station. Where a majority of the travelers who reach a city are merely on their way, it may be right and justifiable that the carriers should be encouraged and induced, if not required, to use a union station. But this, as has already been said, is not the situation in Los Angeles.

It is, and always must be true that "the public pays the freight," and all expenditures imposed upon the railroads must necessarily ultimately be borne by their patrons. The large new investment in real estate and structures, and the loss of existing investments involved in this union passenger station scheme would ultimately be borne by the people of Los Angeles, and the traveling public. One per cent might possibly receive some benefit, and the other ninety-nine per cent would bear practically all the cost.

This community, and the traveling public generally, should not be burdened with the millions of additional investment, and the depreciation and loss of existing investment that would be necessitated by the carrying out of the proposed scheme to compel the abandonment of all existing passenger depots in favor of a depot in a new location. The unreasonableness and inexpedience of this proposal is em-

phasized by the fact that the scheme admittedly contemplates that the depot at the Plaza shall be erected by PRIVATE CAPITAL FOR PRIVATE PROFIT, or be financed in part by the city—by means, it must be supposed, of ANOTHER MUNICIPAL BOND ISSUE!

### THE BEST LOCATIONS FOR PASSENGER STATIONS IN LOS ANGELES

The two principal arguments advanced in favor of the proposed removal to the Plaza of all depots, steam and electric, are, first, that it is the most convenient site possible, and second, that it was unqualifiedly and exclusively recommended by Mr. Bion J. Arnold in his report to the city council on the transportation problems of Los Angeles.

In answer to these contentions, we submit, first, that it is not true that the Plaza would be the most convenient site for a passenger station. The Plaza is about a quarter of a mile further from Fifth and Spring Streets than is the Southern Pacific station. Distance to a depot should, however, be measured by time rather than by miles. By actual check, the running time of street cars from Fifth and Spring Streets to the Plaza is two or three minutes longer than the running time to Fifth and Central Avenue, and by automobile from the same point, during busy hours, it takes half as long again to go to the Plaza as to Fifth and Central.

The Los Angeles railway street car service to the present Southern Pacific station can be made just as satisfactory as to the Plaza. Los Angeles railway cars meet every Southern Pacific train and there is a special siding for street cars in front of the station. In addition to the service directly up town, Central Avenue is one of the main thoroughfares of Los Angeles, and there is good street car service thereon. It would be perfectly feasible to operate through cars from Seventh Street to the depot at Fifth and Central. The Pacific Electric railway has a street car service direct to the Southern Pacific station, which is not the case as to the Plaza.

There are about half a dozen streets that can be used as avenues of approach to the Southern Pacific station from the center of town, while Spring Street and Main Street are the two streets practically available for approach to the Plaza. These streets are already so congested during rush hours that traffic along them is very much obstructed and impeded.

It is argued that the Plaza will be very convenient for passengers on electric cars from the Hollywood district. The Hollywood car line is up a street two thousand feet away from the Plaza. The track has been taken up on that street by permission of the city. There would not be enough business to the Plaza to justify rebuilding the Hollywood line to the Plaza for the reason that there would be no supporting business from other patronage than the traffic to the depot. Hollywood residents who travel on the electric cars want the cars to run down town and not to the Plaza.

So far as the southern part of the town is concerned, there can, of course, be no question that Fifth and Central Avenue is nearer and

more accessible than the Plaza would be. The number of interurban passengers brought to the neighborhood of Sixth and Main Streets by the Pacific Electric cars is now more than seventy thousand per day, and the number is increasing. For most of these people there is no question that Fifth and Central Avenue would be more convenient than the Plaza. They would be brought on the Pacific Electric elevated, by the Fifth and Central station. Charles Mulford Robinson, the city planning expert, recognized Fifth and Central Avenue as the logical situation for a railroad terminal, and he worked out and recommended to the city authorities a feasible plan for a beautiful and effective approach to that site.

The city is growing, and will continue to grow southerly, and with this growth the superiority of locations at Fifth and Central Avenue, and Sixth and Main Streets over the Plaza will continue to increase. The center of population of Los Angeles, and of its tributary, Greater Los Angeles, is now south of Sixth Street. Logically, if all the existing passenger depots are to be torn up by the roots and moved, they should be moved to Pico rather than to the Plaza; but this would obviously be so detrimental, if not disastrous, to the section north of Sixth Street, and would create such a disturbance of business conditions and real estate values that no real estate speculator has, as yet, had the courage even to suggest it.

One of the purposes of the Business Men's Association is to encourage the joint use of existing terminal facilities. The railroads have now in use and occupation in central and convenient locations property adequate in space to accommodate the passenger traffic of Los Angeles for many years to come. They should be encouraged, as far as possible, to make joint use of these properties, and to exchange facilities.

The Southern Pacific and the Salt Lake have already agreed upon a plan for the interchanging of their facilities, and for the association therewith of the Pacific Electric. This plan has been submitted to the Railroad Commission, and we believe it should be and is endorsed and approved by the consensus of opinion of the business community. There is no reason, we believe, why the Santa Fe should not, and in the near future may not voluntarily associate itself in this arrangement. In any event, if that railroad can be required to move its depot to the Plaza, it can with stronger reason and at less expense be required, if the interests of the public demand it, to make joint use of a depot in the neighborhood of Fifth and Central Avenue.

The Southern Pacific, the Salt Lake and Pacific Electric Companies have placed themselves on record as being willing to co-operate immediately in the establishment of what would practically be a joint terminal in the neighborhood of their present terminals, associating and interchanging their facilities, and doing their part toward the complete elimination of grade crossings by removing all their trains from the streets in the business part of the town. The remaining grade crossings along the river banks cannot be abolished by union terminals, or in any other way than by the separation of grades, which

must be done, in any event, at the joint expense of the steam roads, the interurban road, the street railway and the city apportioned as may be equitably determined by the Railroad Commission and the City of Los Angeles.

The Business Men's Association of Los Angeles is devoting its efforts to the elimination of all grade crossings as well as the encouragement of the joint use of terminal facilities. It respectfully asks your support in this program. Already three thousand owners of property in the district bounded by Third and Ninth, Figueroa and Alameda Streets, have subscribed to a petition filed with the Railroad Commission asking it to approve the plans now submitted to it, providing for:

a. THE REMOVAL OF ALL TRAINS FROM ALAMEDA STREET;

b. THE USE IN COMMON BY THE SALT LAKE, SOUTHERN PACIFIC AND PACIFIC ELECTRIC COMPANIES OF THE RIGHT OF WAY ON THE EAST BANK OF THE RIVER, THENCE ACROSS THE RIVER AND BY ELEVATED TRACKS TO THEIR TERMINALS.

c. THE JOINT USE OF A STATION AT FIFTH AND CENTRAL AVENUE BY THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC AND SALT LAKE RAILROADS;

d. THE BUILDING AND USE OF AN ELEVATED ROAD BY THE PACIFIC ELECTRIC COMPANY FROM SIXTH AND MAIN STREETS OVER PRIVATE RIGHT OF WAY CONNECTING WITH THE RAILROAD STATIONS AT FIFTH AND CENTRAL AND THENCE, WITHOUT GRADE CROSSINGS, TO AND ACROSS THE RIVER TO PRIVATE RIGHTS OF WAY.

These proposals are definite and practical; they can be carried out promptly; they meet the City's most urgent needs; they require substantially no additional real estate investments, they are manifestly not prompted or promoted by speculative interests, and they would entail no impairment of property values or disturbance of business conditions. It is hoped that the business community generally will join with the Business Men's Association in supporting them.

In answer to the second contention made in favor of the proposed Plaza union station project, namely, that the Plaza site was unqualifiedly and exclusively recommended by Mr. Bion J. Arnold, it may be pointed out that Mr. Arnold did not make a recommendation of that character.

Mr. Arnold, as the foremost transportation expert in the country, was employed by the city of Los Angeles to report upon transportation conditions and to recommend policies to be followed. Mr. Arnold in his report submitted in October, 1911, did point out at that time that if the values of property in the vicinity of the Plaza were not maintained by means of some improvement that part of the city would suffer from slow paralysis. He gave this as one of his reasons for the consideration of the Plaza as the depot site, IF

"All of the competing trans-continental steam roads can be brought to consider a Union Depot, independent of the Arcade site."

The contingency that Mr. Arnold foresaw six years ago is no longer a matter of prophecy, but of retrospect. It is too late to build a dam to hold the water after it has flowed by. It is not possible by any means now to restore the Plaza to the relative position it held in Pueblo days as the center of the city. Business centers are not created by building union railroad depots. This can be verified in almost any city in the country where a union station for steam railroads has been built. The fine Pennsylvania station in New York did not keep business from moving up town, nor has the Union Station in Washington, or at St. Louis moved the location of the business centers. The New South Station in Boston did not help property values or business in its neighborhood. And, coming nearer home, the erection of a new Southern Pacific Station at Third and Townsend Streets in San Francisco has not caused the business center to move toward it. If it were true that the erection of a "monumental" union terminal at the Plaza would have the effect of moving the business center of Los Angeles back to the Plaza, that fact would itself condemn the scheme, for the resulting disturbance of business conditions and property values would be nothing short of a calamity.

Another reason Mr. Arnold suggested for regarding the Plaza favorably, IF a site "independent of the Arcade site," could be considered was the historic fact that the Plaza was the center of the original pueblo. This, of course, was a purely sentimental reason.

So far from designating the Plaza unqualifiedly as the exclusive site to be considered, Mr. Arnold said that the interurban and steam road terminals ought to be located together, or in convenient proximity so as to form

"a mixing chamber or clearing house between trans-continental and interurban passenger traffic, . . . any plans which are made for a new depot for the Southern Pacific and Salt Lake roads would naturally include some convenient transfer arrangement between these trans-continental steam lines and the network of interurban electric lines, and in considering possible sites this intimate connection must be kept in mind. There would appear to be two sites for such a station—one, that of the present Arcade depot, and the other contiguous to the present Pacific Electric terminal building at Sixth and Main Streets.

**“A station plan, if worked out in connection with the proposed elevated or subway extension for the interurban lines running back to and across the river can be made convenient and adequate for either location. It would be a mistake in my opinion not to encourage the railroads to develop and submit plans for a terminal station of this character.”**

These are precisely the plans which have been developed, and are now under submission to the Railroad Commission. They are the plans which the Business Men's Association believes, for the reasons given herein, are the most practical, and the most beneficial to the business interests of this city. It heartily endorses Mr. Arnold's opinion that it would be a mistake not to encourage the development and execution of these plans.



**Business Men's Association  
of Los Angeles**

**624 Citizens National Bank Building**

**A5076**

**Telephones**

**Main 4366**

---

**Devoted to the Elimination of Railroad Grade Crossings,  
and the Encouragement of the Joint Use  
of Terminal Facilities**

---

**OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS**

**R. A. Rowan, President  
Philip D. Wilson, Secretary  
H. C. Fryman, Treasurer  
Herbert J. Goudge, Counsel**

**James H. Adams  
George I. Cochran  
Wm. M. Garland  
Louis S. Nordlinger  
J. E. Fishburn  
F. J. Mullen  
W. A. Barker  
Vernon Goodwin  
R. P. Bishop**

**J. O. Koepfli  
Stoddard Jess  
George A. Brock  
D. A. Hamburger  
Chester Thompson  
A. H. Voight  
Dwight Hart  
A. M. Klein  
L. R. Mellus**

**Howard L. Rivers**