

Traffic Problem in Los Angeles

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TRAFFIC congestion is generally regarded as a modern condition. Traffic congestion has existed as far back as authentic history records. Pompeii and Herculaneum were so congested that during the rule of Caesar, one-way streets were put in and heavy traffic—meaning bullock carts—was barred on certain main highways. Traffic congestion has existed ever since that time, and with the advent of the motor car, has become increasingly more serious.

All American cities have streets which were laid out with roadway widths suitable for the days of the horse and buggy, and which now, with the vast number of fast moving automobiles, are completely inadequate.

The traffic situation is more acute in Los Angeles than other American cities, as it is not only thirteenth among the great American cities in the amount of downtown street area, having but 22%, while the average American city has 35%, but in addition, there is here the highest ratio of ownership of automobiles, being 2.6 persons per automobile. These two factors alone are causing congestion in our downtown streets that is rapidly reaching the point of saturation.

About three years ago the importance of relief from this intolerable congestion became so apparent to business interests in this city that they banded together and organized the Los Angeles Traffic Commission to study all matters pertaining to the relief of street traffic congestion.

The Automobile Club of Southern California, Motor Car Dealers Association, Pacific Electric Railway, Los Angeles Railway, Retail Dry Goods Merchants Association, Telephone Company, various oil companies, taxicab, trucking and other business groups using the streets, are all associated in this organization, to work out a program which will provide for this city, traffic relief.

The Traffic Commission's program for relief of congestion divides itself naturally into three phases:

First, that of Traffic Regulation, it being felt that by proper regulation the fullest use of the streets could be secured.

Second, Street Construction, thus providing new arteries and connecting up the many dead-end streets, at the same time keeping in repair existing thoroughfares.

Third, the improvement of public transportation by the systematic development of a rapid transit plan.

Sufficient funds were subscribed by these various organizations to retain the best technical advice in each of these three fields, and as a result, the three years' program of the Traffic Commission has brought about a marked relief from traffic congestion.

Traffic Regulations

In July, 1924, the Traffic Commission retained Dr. Miller McClintock of the Municipal Research Bureau of Harvard University, to make a study of existing traffic regulations, many of which were conflicting and unenforceable, and prepare a model traffic code for Los Angeles. This study was completed and the ordinance passed as prepared by Dr. McClintock, and went into effect January 24, 1925.

The operation of this traffic ordinance has been remarkably successful. In 1924 Los Angeles led the world in ratio of automobile accidents, and for the year of 1925 it stood ninth. This material reduction in accidents is directly traceable to this traffic ordinance and has been secured without any sacrifice on the part of the motorist, as the number of cars that clear the intersections has been increased from 7 under the old conditions, to 12 under the new ordinance; thus in actuality increasing the road capacity of our downtown streets nearly 50% without a cent of expense or any change in the physical conditions.

This ordinance has been so successful in its operation that it is being copied all over the United States. Boston has adopted an identical ordinance, with but few modifications necessary to meet their local conditions. Chicago is having a survey made with a view to adapting it to their city.

At the spring elections in 1925, a bond issue of \$350,000, sponsored by the Traffic Commission, for pedestrian tunnels for the protection of school children, was passed, and already construction has been started on one tunnel, and plans are being prepared for twenty-five of these structures which will be built before school opens next fall.

Street Construction

The question of providing adequate street facilities is one that has concerned the Traffic Commission since its inception. In December, 1925, it retained Harland Bartholomew of St. Louis, Frederick Law Olmsted of Brookline, Mass., and Chas. H. Cheney of Los Angeles, to study the street lay-out of this city and prepare a street plan which would afford permanent traffic relief. This plan was completed and was submitted to the voters in November, 1924, as the Major Traffic Street Plan, and at that election was adopted by the city as the official municipal plan for all future street development.

At the same election a first unit, consisting of 26 projects,

was approved by the voters, upon which the City Engineer and City Attorney immediately started the engineering surveys and proceedings. So aggressively have these officials proceeded that the complete engineering plans and final ordinances of these 26 projects, which consist of 37½ miles of street openings and widenings, are practically completed, and most of them are in the hands of the courts for the award of damages to the property owners involved. When the necessary legal decisions are made by the courts, the city can take possession of the lands and start construction, and it is certain that many of these projects will be well under way by the middle of the summer. It is planned, within the next few weeks, to select the second unit upon which the City Engineer and City Attorney can start work.

At the same time the Major Traffic Street Plan has been carried along, the Traffic Commission has been very active in securing additional bridges. It has sponsored two bridge bond issues, both of which have been carried, and plans are now being prepared for these structures.

Among the many small things suggested for traffic relief by the Traffic Commission during the past year, has been the elimination of cross gutters in Twelfth Street. Also, upon its recommendation, many of the corners of the city have been rounded back to facilitate the flow of vehicular traffic.

Public Transportation

The Traffic Commission has at all times taken the position that public transportation is a vital necessity—not only to the relief of traffic, but to the continued growth and prosperity of this city.

In January, 1924, at the request of the Traffic Commission, the City Council and the County Board of Supervisors retained Major R. J. Kelker and Chas. DeLeuw, two transportation engineers of Chicago, to prepare a rapid transit plan for the metropolitan district of Los Angeles. Their report has been completed and is now being considered for adoption by the City and County jointly as their official transit plan. The Traffic Commission has organized a rapid transit committee, consisting of one hundred prominent citizens who are studying this plan with a view of determining how best to secure for this city adequate rapid transit facilities.

Conclusion

The Traffic Commission feels that it is justified in being proud of the progress made upon its program for traffic relief, and such progress as has been made has been possible only through the co-operation of the members of the City Council, City Engineer, City Attorney, and practically every public official as well as the solid support of not only the large business groups, but the property owners and voters. If this continued co-operation and support is given to the Commission's program, 1926 will see material relief in traffic congestion, and by so doing, bring added prosperity to Los Angeles.

NEW BOARD MEETS

Pat Doyle, probably the best beloved city employee of them all, again sits in the saddle in control of the Board of Directors of the All-City Employees' Association.

He was unanimously re-elected to that position, at a meeting of the old and new board of directors held Tuesday, March 9, at the Yale Street Yard where Pat presides in his capacity as city employee.

There was absolutely nothing to it. A motion that he be named chairman, a quick second, closing the nominations and his election by the secretary casting the ballot of the entire assembly.

The meeting of the board was a love feast. Feast is right for they had other things to eat than love and these things were very substantial. In fact the policy of the board hereafter will be to have lunch at the same time it holds its meetings, a marked improvement over old methods and a great convenience.

Almost the entire session was devoted to the discussion of pensions. They all had to admit that they knew nothing about the pension situation for all that has come out of the Pension Commission has been silence in chunks and not much of that even.


But it was good to see the renewed activity in the desire for an adequate pension plan. Most of the men have felt rather discouraged chiefly because they could not learn what was being done, if anything, and the general attitude lately has been "Oh to ——— with this pension stuff." They have all wanted the pensions but they did not want to work themselves into a pensionable condition in order to get them. So lately there has been a lull in pension promotion.

But no longer is that lull to continue. The Association went to the bat by the appointment of President Ray as chairman of a committee, he to select such other committeemen as he pleases. President Ray and his committee is to consult with Mr. Lynch, who has been organizer and Mr. Steele, who has been the chairman of the ways and means committee.

The new directors who were seated as members of the new board are: Pat Doyle, Col. W. G. Scheiber, James Ainsworth, James MacGilvary, J. M. Quint, E. G. McFadden, J. G. Starr, Luke Mather, Charles O. Brittain, J. E. Eley and C. U. Welch.

The retired board was composed of Pat Doyle, chairman; E. F. McFadden, F. A. Battey, J. V. Ainsworth, J. E. Dorsey, S. Oliver, Capt. Theo. Fichtel, Martin Brown, H. S. Payne, J. E. Eley, R. W. Stewart and C. D. Ray, together with a number of heads of departments who acted as appointive members of the board.

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