

Tackling Traffic in the Fordham, Grand Concourse Area

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Traffic is a universal problem. Everyone becomes part of it at frequent intervals and most people are involved every day. Each person looks at the traffic problem in the light of his own everyday experiences. His or her views and answers to the problem are based on those experiences and usually disregard the complexities and relationships of needs that constitute the overall traffic problem.

The real answers to the traffic problem lie in the application of science, research, and engineering principles. Because this is the only successful approach, there has grown up in the past quarter of a century a branch of the Civil Engineering profession known as Traffic Engineering. The Traffic Engineer is concerned with the planning and geometric designs of streets and highways and of abutting land and with traffic operations thereon as their use is related to the safe, convenient, and economic transportation of persons and goods. It is the responsibility of the Department of Traffic, created in June of 1950, to carry out this function in the City of New York.

Actually, the traffic problem is not one, but a multitudinous maze of problems. Therefore, the successful approach is that of isolating one of these smaller problems and developing an answer or an improvement for it.

An example of this approach is the new traffic signal arrangement on Fordham Road, between Sedgwick and Crotona Avenues. The signals were rearranged at many intersections, the three-color signals were installed in place of the old two-color signals, installations were made on mastarms over the roadway so as to place signals where drivers could see them, new



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control mechanisms were installed, and the whole system was interconnected so as to enable changes in timing from the master control. The net result has been a smoother, safer, more convenient, and more economic flow of traffic along Fordham Road.

The act of transporting persons and goods does not involve merely the motion of vehicles over streets and highways. The trip is useless unless the vehicle can be stopped, loaded and unloaded, or parked. Hence, one of the important facets of the traffic problem is to provide for the parking of vehicles.

Important progress has been made in the City of New York by the parking meter program, developed by the Department of Traffic. By eliminating the all-day parker from valuable curb space in business areas, the parking meter has made each available curb space serve several hours a day instead of only one. Hence, by the use of this important tool the number of parking spaces has been, in effect, multiplied several times

in the various business sections in the city. This has been particularly true in the Fordham-Grand Concourse area, one of the most important business areas in the city.

Approximately three years ago the Board of Estimate gave the Department of Traffic the responsibility for developing an off-street parking program. The Department immediately undertook the study of specific projects in several areas, including two projects in the Fordham-Grand Concourse area. As the result of these studies, the first project with this Department recommended was in the Fordham-Grand Concourse area. Unfortunately, the project was defeated, due partly to the opposition of business groups. The other project was not recommended because of its location at a relatively remote corner of the business area which would be of limited use to the district as a whole.

The Department of Traffic has continued its studies of possible sites to determine their practicality and feasibility. Location of a parking facility is a critical consideration. It must be within reasonable walking distance of the heart of the district. Sidewalk grades, street lighting, ease of accessibility for automobiles, and other factors relative to the convenience of the customer are all important. Costs of acquisition and development must be reasonable.

It is particularly difficult to find sites that are economically feasible, attractive to customers, and which do not involve substantial displacement of persons or businesses. It is the expectation of the Department of Traffic to be able to make concrete proposals for additional off-street facilities in the Fordham-Grand Concourse area at a very early date.