

THE ISLAND PLAN - TRANSPORT PLANNINGPRESENT TRAFFIC PROBLEMS

1. These are confined primarily to St. Helier and the surrounding urban area, although radial routes to the town, particularly from St. Brelade and the West of the Island, suffer from congestion at peak hours throughout the year, and at other times of the day during the tourist season.
2. The summer of 1979 provided the most concentrated traffic congestion in the central part of St. Helier which has so far been experienced. This resulted because the growth of local traffic together with tourist traffic combined to give the highest volumes competing for road space. The reduced volume of tourist traffic in the following years has more than off-set the continued growth of local traffic, resulting in less severe congestion in the central streets of town.
3. Peak hour traffic is a growing problem through the whole year. Evening peak hour traffic increases during the tourist season, whilst morning peak hour traffic is largely unaffected by tourist movement but is, however, influenced by the movement of local residents involved in travel to schools.
4. The situation has been reached in the urban area where quite small variations in traffic volumes substantially affect the level of congestion and consequently the duration of journeys.
5. Earlier predictions forecast a critical state for traffic in St. Helier by the early 1980's. The recession in tourism has relieved the position. The local population is also responding to travel problems by changing habits - making journeys at non-peak times, shopping out of town, or not making journeys at all. There has been some response to this from the business and commerce sectors by decentralisation.
6. Assuming the local population rises to 80,000, the growth of ownership of cars by local residents continues on its upward trend and the tourism industry recovers from the present recession, traffic congestion in St. Helier will become critical, probably in the period between 1985 and 1990.

SHORT TERM MEASURES

The following is a resume of measures which ought to be carried through in the short term to relieve the traffic problems of St. Helier:-

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1. An increase in the carrying capacity of the town Ring Road at peak times by the introduction of a peak hour clearway and a control on movement at specific junctions around the Ring Road. The Ring Road is vital in vehicle communication because it serves:-
 - (a) To bring traffic to the town from outlying areas;
 - (b) To transmit through traffic from one side of the town to the other;
 - (c) To carry some traffic diverted from the central area as a result of increased traffic pressure in the heart of the town.

The traffic management measures outlined above for the Ring Road are short term remedial measures and are unlikely to satisfy the congestion problems associated with the Ring Road.

2. Improve on-street unloading facilities in the town centre and introduce a commercial vehicle licence. This is required to assist the servicing of shops and businesses in the town area and to reduce competition for available space and the resultant congestion that currently occurs from this competition.
3. To move some town centre on-street parking to provide increased unloading facilities and to reduce the attraction to the central area of cars hunting for available space.
4. Provide advanced signing of space availability in off-street car parks. The aim of this proposal is to reduce traffic circulating on the road system in the centre of town by providing information on main routes entering the town where parking is available.

Note

The above measures are under consideration for introduction at an early date.

MEDIUM TERM MEASURES

1. A number of measures can help to reduce the critical volumes of traffic, including:-
 - (a) The promotion of flexible working hours to enable a proportion of the working population to avoid the concentrated peak travel time.
 - (b) The staggering of opening times of the main town schools by a minimum of half an hour. This should be linked to the policy of flexible working hours.

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- (c) The operation of direct buses from a number of outlying district collection points to schools, with the object of reducing the present number of special two-way journeys.
- (d) The encouragement of cycling to school by the provision of improved facilities both for the storage of cycles at school and for safer travel on the roads serving schools.

The ideas above are aimed at reducing peak hour traffic congestion.

- 2. Reduction of town centre congestion throughout the day will be necessary. There are proposals to cordon off the central part of town and this would prevent holiday traffic from entering within the cordon during the busy period of the day. In addition, holiday traffic could be prevented from using some of the more popular central car parks. It is calculated that there may be up to 20% reduction in traffic in the central area of town by restricting holiday traffic.
- 3. The provision of further off-street parking facilities is planned. The construction of a new car park at Patriotic Street is projected for 1984, to be followed by a further car park at the Gas Works site. These car parks, providing between 1,200 and 1,500 spaces, will help meet the growing demand for parking. Some of the increase provided by the facilities will be offset by the need to remove further on-street parking.

LONGER TERM MEASURES

- 1. It no longer appears acceptable to promote a road improvement plan designed to cater for the ultimate travel demand in and around St. Helier that results from the free use of the motor car. Road improvements which are being promoted include:-
 - (a) The Weighbridge road plan included in the redevelopment proposals and essentially necessary before the reclaimed land West of the Albert Quay can be developed. An essential part of the overall development is the road plan and transport facilities associated with the operation of the harbours, including areas for breakdown of commercial vehicles into smaller units, traffic/passenger handling facilities and car parking provision for all the existing and new activities to be developed in the area.
 - (b) A road improvement between the La Collette Industrial Development and Mount Bingham is proposed to assist the traffic flow generated by the Industrial Development, and also to provide a relief to the East/West Tunnel route, which is now operating at saturation level and must inevitably produce a diversion of traffic flow around the Southern route as overall town traffic levels rise.
 - (c) An improvement to the Ring Road is highly desirable but difficult to attain on a scale that will have sufficient impact on potential traffic congestion. Nevertheless, physical improvement of the Ring Road will remain a priority if severe congestion is to be avoided and the town remain viable as the only centre in the Island for business and commerce.

2. A limit on the volume of holiday traffic by controlling the number of visitors' cars circulating on Island roads may be necessary. The method by which this could be achieved would be the introduction of some control in the number of visitors' cars brought to the Island and the number of hire cars allowed to operate. This measure should only be considered if there is a general need to reduce holiday traffic throughout the Island or a central cordon control around the town centre proves impracticable.
3. A restriction on the size of goods vehicles is desirable when breakdown facilities on land made available West of the Albert Quay can be developed. A physical limit to the size of vehicles operating in the town area could then be applied.

A restriction on the size of coaches operating in the Island has also been considered and may prove necessary in the longer term. Generally larger vehicles, including heavy goods vehicles, are not a major problem whilst circulating on the roads system. The main difficulty arises when they park to off-load. At such times their physical size can virtually obstruct the highway creating considerable congestion, when smaller vehicles would either be able to park completely off the highway or in any event would cause less obstruction.

4. Substantial restraint will require controls on local residents' cars and the most effective control should be on the way these cars are used, rather than any restriction on ownership. The town is where the future severe congestion will be felt and the ultimate restraint proposal will be to control the number of local cars entering the town area. Such restrictions may only apply at peak congestion times and would probably include a cordon control in the vicinity of the Ring Road effectively rationing the number of vehicles allowed to cross the cordon. Married to this control may be a need to limit the parking facilities available to local residents at the time when the cordon control operates, i.e. car parking space may be limited until the time of day when free access is allowed. Clearly with such controls there will be an essential need to improve bus services, probably requiring subsidised operations involving express passenger bus services from outlying areas of the Island direct to the town.

The problems associated with the above measures are substantial and could only be contemplated if congestion reaches unacceptable levels for the majority of the population.

5. An alternative strategy to the severe restraint controls, as detailed for example in 4. above, together with some physical improvements, is to allow decentralisation of business and commerce away from St. Helier. Indeed, it is already occurring as a natural consequence of traffic congestion and parking problems in the town area. In the circumstances which now prevail, this is a policy that requires careful examination. With regard to traffic movements which would result from decentralisation

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planning, all that can be said at this stage is to make the obvious point that substantial business and commercial development in any part of the Island will generate high traffic flows between the area and St. Helier, and therefore major development should not be located in the West of the Island. Such development would be best located in the North or North-East sector of the Island. The generation of traffic between any new development area and St. Helier will add to the traffic volumes around the Ring Road of St. Helier, requiring most careful study.

CONCLUSION

It is not possible for me to provide an alternative summary to the detailed proposals contained in the Jersey Transportation Study Report of what needs to be done to ensure adequate and safe road communications in the Island up to the end of the century. The period since the publication of the report and the resistance to adopt virtually any of the road improvement proposals, supports the conclusion that eventual saturation of the existing road network in the urban area may be inevitable. As travel in this area becomes increasingly difficult three things will occur. Firstly, the population will make adjustments to cope with the prevailing situation. This is likely to have a detrimental effect on the life and business of the town. Secondly, some road improvement and restraint measures will be adopted. Finally, more stringent restraint controls or an acceptance of major road improvements will become essential, unless some alternative policy is adopted at an early stage, such as the decentralisation to which I have referred. Such decentralisation will need to be on a sufficient scale to reduce the traffic problems of the town area to manageable proportions.


CHIEF CIVIL ENGINEER

27th January 1982