Compte Rendu de la Conférence Internationale sur la Recherche en Matière de Transport

Proceedings of the International Conference on Transportation Research

PREMIÈRE CONFÉRENCE

FIRST CONFERENCE

Bruges, Belgium
Juin, 1973

Bruges, Belgium
June, 1973

COLLEGE D' EUROPE

TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH FORUM

The New York City Garment Center Urban Goods Movement Study

by

*Carl Berkowitz**
Louis Rubenstein
George Lesser

NEW YORK CITY—"Fashion Capital of the World" greets the visitor to the Garment Center, from signs on lamp-posts, in shop windows and in promotional literature provided for the many buyers who visit daily.

For too many years, the largest manufacturing industry, employing over a quarter of a million people directly and indirectly, had been taken for granted. Since the late nineteenth century when the ready-to-wear industry developed in this country and settled in New York, the fate and fortunes of both the industry and the City have been closely intertwined.

New York was the prime location for such an industry because of historical factors. The Civil War created a need for cheaply made manufactured clothes and this need expanded into civilian markets after the war. New York also benefited from its location on the seacoast, inasmuch as it became the first home for many of this nation's immigrants, many of whom were highly-skilled garment craftsmen. Also, the lack of labor laws permitted sweat shops to flourish and these thousands of men, women and children worked for the lowest wages. All of these factors combined to form this City's most important industry.

Originally the sweatshops and lofts of the Garment Industry were located south of the present Greenwich Village, in high density buildings rising ten to fifteen floors above the narrow streets of lower Manhattan. Most of these buildings remain today housing both artists and some of the many blue collar industries hiring low-skilled persons. In the first New York Regional Plan, developed during the late twenties, a survey of the changing garment industry locations was prepared. The first map showed industry locations circa 1910; most lofts were located in the south village location. By 1929-30 a remarkable shift uptown had occurred; the lofts had relocated to a site immediately north of Pennsylvania Station; the site of today's Garment Center. Manufacturers wanted their showrooms near the station, which was the prime mode of entry into the City for out of town wholesale buyers.

Examining the new site on official maps shows that the area, prior to 1920, contained many tenements and low houses most three and four story; few above five stories. The streets measured sixty-feet from building line to building line, as they do today. The street system at that time was quite adequate for a medium-density residential community. Yet one need not be a planner or engineer to realize the consequences to the movement of traffic, with the transforming of this area to a highly developed commercial area, requiring thousands of deliveries of goods during the normal business hours.

In the 1920's and 1930's few private developers, especially those whose capital built the present Garment Center, paid much attention to planning standards. Nor could anyone see the importance of the motor car and truck and the greater competition for urban space that the private auto would pose for commercial vehicles. In a period of over four decades, garments are received and delivered much in the same manner.

New York City has been losing its competitiveness in the garment manufacturing, slowly, since the 1920's. At that time, immigration laws became much more strict and exclusive causing a decrease in the industry's highly qualified labor supply. Also, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union was formed creating much needed minimum wage laws and better working conditions. Unfortunately, for New York, other areas of the nation, notably the South, didn't become unionized at this time and consequently became a larger competition for the garment manufacturing dollar. The textiles mills located mostly in the South was another reason for drawing away business. Lately, foreign countries, notably in the Far East, have also become a challenge to New York and all American Industry.

**Director, Evaluation and Development, Transportation Administration, City of New York.*

Because of the eroding of the City's garment manufacturing base, the style-centers and administrative functions were also threatened. New York is indeed the Garment Capital of the World, especially since the last World War when domestic designers. most located in the City became known throughout the world. in spite of competition from Paris and Rome. for their stylistic grace and quality. The industry, as was noted above, provides a quarter of a million jobs and is most important to the City's economic base and export capabilities. A critical factor for the City's decision-makers was the fact that among blue-collar industries, the apparel industry, provides approximately 55% of its jobs to semi- and unskilled persons, the city-wide average for all blue collar industries being 40%. For almost a century the industry has provided a large degree of mobility up the career ladder for thousands of job seekers. Today, when many persons are alarmed with the rising welfare rolls. job creation especially for people with low skills. is considered of prime importance in New York government. Immigrants continue to come to New York and other urban centers. Now they are from rural areas of the United States rather than from abroad. Not only are they less skilled from their predecessors but the opportunities for upward social mobility have declined with the reduced number of low skill jobs. This is a major national problem.

It is for this reason. as well as several others, that the City government has taken a very activist role in promoting and encouraging the expansion of the industry.

In June 1971, the Mayor created the Office of Apparel Industry Planning and Development (O.A.I.P.D.) to survey the situation in the industry and to recommend specific policies to improve conditions in the Garment Center for the short term and longer term plans for the modernization of facilities and transportation.

The OAIPD has been quite successful in achieving a high degree of cooperation between the industry and City government. A major complaint among various groups in the industry is the terrific amount of congestion in and around the streets of the Garment Center. This congestion causes millions of dollars in losses due to delays and damaged goods. The apparel industry works within a very tight time frame. Styles and needs of retailers occur so rapidly that any delays puts the manufacturer and distributor in a very poor competitive position from the view point of increased costs and lost sales; this special factor puts a high premium on the ease of transportation shipments across town and across-country.

Traffic congestion also adds to the detriment of the physical environment. Trucks parked or stalled in traffic with their motors running provide a great deal of air pollution, while noise pollution too, occurs in such situations.

New York City's Traffic Department, a division of the Transportation Administration, has applied the more traditional traffic engineering techniques to the problems of the Garment Center. They have achieved several major successes over the last 20 years. However, the bulk of the problem remains. It was gradually realized that the problem was not limited to traffic and street activities. That the problem is an urban goods movement problem and not traffic engineering problem. Its solution will require an understanding of both apparel industry processes and traffic engineering principles. Improvements will come from revised procedures in each of these areas.

For all of the above reasons, the Transportation Administration applied in January, 1972, to the United States Department of Transportation for funding for a unique urban goods movement study which through both short-range implementation and long-range policy goals will achieve a dramatic breakthrough in the Garment Center's chronic congestion.

Accomplishing this objective will contribute to achieving the following adjunct goals:

(1) improving the understanding of the movement of goods within cities, and related problems;

(2) developing alternatives to achieve greater transportation efficiency and to reduce the negative environmental consequences of goods movements in a particular city; and

(3) reducing conflicts between person and goods transportation

(4) providing information and developing alternatives to be used to improve the efficiency and reduce the environmental impacts of goods movements in other urban areas.

Besides the Office of Apparel Industry Planning and Development, there exists another important group devoted to the garment industry's problems; the Apparel Industry Council. The Apparel Industry Council is a broad-based group of manufacturers, unions, city officials and other interested parties, it was formed about the same time as Office of Apparel Industry Planning and Development. The Apparel Industry Council consists of also, three small committees for policy planning. The short-Range Committee concerns itself with street lighting, san-

itation, security, street repairing, industry promotion, etc. The Legislative Committee is self-explanatory, and the Long-Range Committee deals with industry trends, manufacturing space, the Transportation Administration Garment Center Study and coordination with other planning agencies.

The Short-Range Committee has achieved a large degree of success in the areas delegated to it. It was in the Long-Range that the Transportation Administration's proposal for the study, developed by Carl Berkowitz, myself and Louis Rubenstein, was first presented.

This study is unique, not only because of its scope and depth, but also because it marks the first time that a major effort backed by the federal government in the urban goods movement area. In key legislation (e.g. DOT Act of 1966, the UMTA Act 1964 and the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962), in policy statements (e.g., the 1971 DOT Statement on National Transportation Policy), the FHWA Policy and Procedure Memoranda and Instructional Memoranda (e.g., PPM 50-9, Urban Transportation Planning) and in the speeches of the Secretary, frequent reference is made to the goal of efficiency, to urban transportation as well as intercity transportation, to balanced transportation, to freight transportation as well as to passenger transportation and to environmental quality. To date, however, most of the Department of Transportation's programs in urban transportation have been directed towards improving the transportation of people in urban areas. Similarly, at the metropolitan level, transportation plans call for more efficient movement of people and goods.

Being the first study grant application ever in Urban Goods Movement resulted in several unique problems. There were no formalized procedures for processing the application. The study had difficulty in finding its proper home in the Department of Transportation.

In May 1972, the Tri-State Regional Planning Agency, after having assured itself of the prospects for success of the study, submitted as part of their work program. As most of you know, on October 30, 1972, former Secretary of Transportation Volpe came to the Garment Center to announce the go ahead for the study. The study is being monitored by the Assistant Secretary for Urban and Environmental Affairs, John Hirten, who is ably represented by Charles Hedges. Funding is provided by United States Department of Transportation and the United States Environmental Protection Agency and New York City, the first year effort is $200,000.

For the first year of the study, efforts will focus on data acquisition from past studies and ongoing surveys and the development of immediate action program(s).

The first task, data acquisition, will include a literature search, assembly of unpublished data, e.g., transportation and land use data, collection of current data through vehicle counts, air and noise pollution measurements, photo surveys and interviews. Air pollution data is to include the following parameters: carbon monoxide, total hydrocarbons, particulates, nitrogen dioxide, aldehydes, and lead.

Field surveys will include parking duration studies, elevators use surveys, examination of business patterns and shipment requirements. A complete understanding of the economic structure of the present goods movement system will be developed.

Another unique feature of this study is the emphasis on administrative shipment flows. These we define as the flow of information which controls the physical movement of goods. It often occurs that a truck driver can double park for half an hour blocking traffic while waiting to get a receipt signed, even though the goods are delivered. Sometimes he delivers when the receiver is not ready or even to the wrong address of entrance. We have high hopes that changes in some of these procedures can improve goods movement and traffic flow.

The parking duration studies should yield interesting results. Several persons have claimed that the larger trucking firms use empty trucks merely to hold valuable parking space.

The second task includes an analysis and identification of problems. A graphic model or activity network of present goods movement system shall be constructed, showing the parts of the process, their interrelationship, and freight-passenger conflicts and environmental problem areas. This will be more like on industrial engineering flow chart than a sophisticated computer model. The cost of the present goods movement system shall be developed by applying factors for labor, equipment, space rental and transportation rates and costs to estimates of traffic volume, present and future.

A major problem of the garment industry is theft and pilferage; during the past several years hijacking of trucks had been very costly to the industry. The problem with control of thefts is that the small carrier, which makes up a large part of the transport system, has little incentive in controlling these losses. The Transportation Administration and the Office of Apparel Industry

Planning Development have set up a Cargo Security Technical Committee to coordinate plans and programs among the various elements of the industry, from the insurance underwriter to the shipper. In this study, the costs of thefts and pilferage will be calculated.

In order to identify the major groups, both social and political, extension surveys will be conducted with labor officials, trade associations, manufacturers, community leaders, residents and trucking officials.

The most important part, in our opinion, of this first year effort, will be to develop an immediate action program. Based on data collection and analysis several options are to be developed. Based on prior studies and our own brainstorming we have developed several options. A partial list of the short range alternatives to be evaluated includes:

* Design new hand carts with protective covers making their use obligatory.
* One possibility might be a color-coordinated and symbol-coordinated hand card delivery system, making unauthorized persons easy to identify.
* Establish new parking regulations and improvement of alternate side of street regulations.
* Establish new trucking schedules including off-hour deliveries.
* Establish required routes to be used solely by trucks entering and leaving the Garment Center to a) minimize hijacking through concentrated surveillance, and b) create an orderly flow of traffic, c) relate Garment Center traffic to redevelopment of the West Side Highway.
* Provide overnight parking for trucks to improve security of cargo.
* Establish separate lanes for pushed vehicles.
* Improved communications systems between truckers, shippers, and receivers.
* Parking reservation and enforcement system.
* Street Widenings
* Movement of street furniture to increase unobstructed sidewalk space or curb parking space.
* Observance of local traffic regulations by public utility and federal government vehicles.
* Restrictions on through crosstown automobiles traffic.
* Use of vacant lots for off-street parking.

During the first year we hope to answer several very important questions. First of all, we must determine if the transportation problems of the Garment Center are amenable to solution. Secondly, what are the trade-offs between the movement of freight and people? Which alternative provides the greatest environmental improvements? What are the short-range alternatives which could be implemented with no modification in existing structures? What are the estimated costs and benefits? What are the intermediate and long-range alternatives available?

Successful or not, and we are confident that we shall succeed, a great deal of knowledge will be obtained that will aid other planners, engineers and government decision-makers throughout the world in the very vital, new studies in urban good movement.