

Railroads in the Urban Environment

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THE mere mention of the words "urban" and "cities" causes most people to think of difficult problems being faced by cities these days. Yet throughout history, cities have been the symbols of civilization. Man is naturally gregarious. He needs and wants to associate with other people for maximum productivity and creativeness. There is a basic need for the interrelating of ideas and products. We might say that proximity among people is a key to human progress.

Some 75 percent of our nation's economic wealth and productive capacity is concentrated in about 2 percent of the total land area occupied by metropolitan areas. Two-thirds of our population now live in and around cities. Almost all of our population growth is predicted for these areas, and 20 years from now probably 85 percent of our people will live in metropolitan areas. When this happens, over one-half of our total population will be living in about 40 great urban complexes.

The importance of an adequate transportation network under such circumstances would seem obvious. I have in mind not only a strong and viable railroad system, but good highways, air and water systems as well. Within this framework let me discuss with you very briefly four major areas in which railroads are involved.

Mass Transit

A great deal has been said in recent years with respect to the opportunities and problems of mass transit. I would guess that highway



In the design of the elevated portion of the Bay Area Rapid Transit system in California, effort was taken to avoid the feeling of massiveness associated with older elevated systems. Designers tapered the girders, separated the roadway girders to let a band of sunlight through, tapered the T-beams, and made the piers octagonal to eliminate bulk. In residential areas, as above, the area under the aerial structure will be landscaped and planted for the use of the community. (Source: Cronk and Associates, San Francisco, Calif.)

planners as a group are considerably more informed on this subject than most other groups. I see no inevitable conflict between mass transit and highway planning. On the contrary, there should be every reason for coordination and cooperation. I am sure that highway planners are no more desirous of covering the surface of major parts of urban areas with highway and parking areas where the real need exists for high-density mass transit than commuter railroads or other mass transit operators would be of operating their facilities where people can be better served by some other form of transportation.

Mass transit facilities require today (and even more so tomorrow and 20 years from tomorrow) a great deal more coordination with highway and parking planners. I want to urge you therefore to talk with

us about your plans. Having participated in the development and implementation of several demonstration projects, I know from first-hand experience how important coordination of rail, highway and parking planning facilities can be. I urge you to come and talk with us about your future plans and ideas. Let me add that I hope we in turn will come to talk with you about our ideas.

We are on the threshold of a new high-speed rail service between Washington and New York. In light of the growing population complexes that I have noted before, I can think of no more important development. We simply have to know from direct experience the contribution and benefit that such service can make to a properly functioning society. Here too, proper highway and parking planning is absolutely essential. As our experience grows and develops with this new service, I would urge that your own planning efforts would take fully into account the lessons from this service, whatever they may be.

Multiple Uses of Rights-of-Way

This is a subject which is not a new one to many of us. Railroad rights-of-way have historically been subjected to a multiple of uses. Aside from providing for railroad service, they have also served as paths for oil and gas pipelines, water lines, electric transmission lines, communication lines, etc.

Yet as the access lanes to and from our growing centers become more important, we must further intensify their use. Almost 50 years ago we saw planning result in one of the most important center city complexes develop over a railroad right-of-way in the heart of New York City. Other examples are familiar to all of us. I can almost hear someone say, "But there are not enough of these examples." I agree — we need to do a great deal more. Sometimes though, it seems so difficult to bring together all the required interests that it is simpler to look elsewhere. Whatever may have been the problems in the past, I think we all realize now the opportunity these rights-of-way afford to us. Certainly there are problems and difficulties, but I suggest to you that if we talk about these matters and work together looking for affirmative results, that we can look for progress.

Air Rights Over Railroad Yards and Other Facilities

Here is an area which is really yet untapped for urban development. With the historical growth of cities and urban areas, very often we find that railroad yards are in important locations. While use of the air rights over these yards has long been recognized, progress has not been as great as one might expect. In recent years there has been a great deal of talk on this subject, and here and there a little progress, but not enough for the potential benefit. It does not take much imagination to recognize what an uplift a major development on the air rights of a

railroad freight yard would give to an entire neighborhood. Here are opportunities for planning and development. There are problems, but there are opportunities here as well.

Industrial Development

The role played by railroads in this field is not well understood. I think it is of particular relevance to highway planners. Railroads working with industry, government agencies, and others make a significant and important contribution in this field. Their efforts result in billions of dollars of new investment each year, thousands of new jobs and job opportunities, and substantial amounts of new tax revenues.

Railroads devote a great deal of effort to this function not only because of the benefits to the community, but also to provide for future growth potential for railroad-borne traffic. Many of you know how important we think highways and highway planning are to this function. A location otherwise suitable for industrial development can hardly be considered if there are not adequate highways to service the facility.

But adequate planning cuts more than one way. Consideration must be given to proper and adequate highways to serve existing industrial areas. Equally (and perhaps more importantly, because more can be done about it) we need adequate planning for future industrial growth. Important in this regard is to avoid cutting up good potential industrial sites or cutting off access to railroad service of good potential industrial sites. Those of you who have had contact with this problem know of the growing shortage of good sites. We in the railroad industry think that we have developed a special competence in this field. We urge you in your planning to take this problem into account, and let us give you our ideas and the benefit of our experience.