

Our Transportation System is in Crisis - 61

ICC Cricket World Cup (CWC), West Indies 2007, Local Organising Committee (LOC) Event Transport Plan states "The traffic disruptions caused by this event on local residents, businesses, hospitals, schools, etc., must be considered and measures taken to minimize the impact. If the event restricts vehicular access around the venue measures and routes must be designed to manage this situation...In order to achieve this goal, proper planning, design, supervising, implementation and maintenance of traffic route control is necessary.

"The Traffic Restricted Zone (TRZ) is created so as to make each venue accessible and to facilitate the arrival and departure of players, officials, media, sponsors, staff/volunteers, and spectators while also minimizing problems for area residents. The TRZ will only be accessible to those vehicles which display the Cricket World Cup Special Access and Parking Permit.

"The No Parking Zone (NPZ) will be limited to the streets immediately surrounding the venue, except where venue specific extenuating circumstances (i.e. additional street parking, beyond streets immediately surrounding the venue, could impact venue traffic movements) may occur. The NPZ, designated parking areas, will only be accessible to those vehicles which display Cricket World Cup special Access and Parking Permits or neighbourhood residents and businesses with LOC specific parking permit stickers. Shops located in the No Parking Zone will be able to unload merchandise in NPZ areas in accordance with the Venue Traffic Management Plan delivery window."

What is the context in which the elaborate plan for road closures, TRZs, and NPZs was determined for World Cup cricket at the

Queen's Park Oval? Normally, a traffic management plan for a major event like this would involve the agencies of government responsible for transportation planning and traffic management, the Police, and the City Council, as well as the LOC. These would work together to create a game day traffic plan to minimize inconveniences while safely and efficiently moving traffic. They would have a strong focus towards collaboration with the relevant stakeholders, including other state agencies, public transport operators and local residents and businesses. This process would be started at least six months before the start of the event to enable sufficient time for planning of street closures, traffic restriction plans and other planning. What special skills do the Police have to single-handedly undertake this most critical activity? When did the planning begin? And who was consulted?

The traffic management plan should be developed to address the following:

- Maximise the use of public transport on event days to and from the venue, while minimising the dependence on private vehicle use;
- Ensure local residents and businesses have minimal disruption before and after events;
- Minimise disturbance of local traffic and public transport on event days; and,
- Maximise public safety in and around the venue.

Some emphasis in this campaign has been placed on the use of public transport. I am pleased that my earlier suggestion of utilizing the following sites as park-and-ride facilities for trips to POS has been accepted: in the south, Mannie Ramjohn Stadium, Marabella; in the south, Ato Boldon Stadium, Couva; in the east, Larry

Gomes Stadium, Arima; and, in the west, Hasely Crawford Stadium, Mucurapo. I also suggested that there are other large secure fringe parking sites which are not owned by the state, but which an offer could be made by Government for consideration, and these include Divali Nagar in Chaguanas, and the Centre of Excellence in Macoya.

The location of park-and-ride facilities is critical to their effectiveness. The most effective is nearest the origin of the journey, rather than the destination. Parking at these sites for the CWC should be free (instead of \$20) as an introductory programme for addressing traffic congestion in POS, and more specifically as Government congestion alleviation subsidy. The parking charge at the Queen's Park Savannah should be higher though, at least \$60, instead of \$30. In other words, the policy should be that the lowest user fees should be charged for the furthest locations of park-and-ride facilities; therefore, Queen's Park would demand the highest user fee. This would discourage motorists from preferring parking at locations nearest to the destination, thereby minimising motorists from having to enter the city. It may even be useful to consider using the nearly-completed 1600-stall parking facility at the Government Office Campus in downtown POS. It would certainly provide an advance test on how it is likely to function when the Campus is complete.

Further, as a measure to maximise passenger occupancy in vehicles wishing to use park-and-ride, parking fees may be charged considering the number of occupants. For example, for each passenger, \$5 could be taken off of the fee up to a specific minimum charge for the day. This would encourage carpooling. The entire process would have to be monitored so see that vehicles are not

recycling passengers outside the gates so as to reduce fares.

What are the 'extenuating circumstances' for such a wide area of parking restrictions? Couldn't the existing one-sided parking simply be rigorously enforced outside the TRZ? And what about the existing public transport operators, such as taxis, that have to link between east and west of the Oval – have their representatives been communicated with, and can we ensure cooperation among them? And what about the primary and secondary schools in the area, particularly their activities at closing time around 3:00pm – the parents and guardians waiting in their cars, would they be considered to be parked and thus be penalised?

Futuristic cities are currently seeking to minimise the terrible impact of the automobile on urban life as they have recognised that it: kills street life, damages the social fabric of communities, isolates people, fosters suburban sprawl, endangers other street users, causes air pollution, wastes energy and natural resources, mars the city beauty, etc. The LOC philosophy, if properly conceived, can assist us in developing a longer term strategy to deal with traffic. The key objective is to move as many people as possible by public transport and to provide the necessary service improvements, linkages and bus priorities to cater for the additional demands, all while involving the stakeholders in the steps. There is a requirement for extensive traffic management to ensure that everyone gets where they need to on time. This strategy is not police business.

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