

Near-Side Versus Far-Side Stops

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Today, without mass transit facilities, cities would cease to exist and there would be no urban traffic problems. Therefore, if we are to prolong the life of our cities, we are obliged to plan the very best possible transit facilities, laying emphasis upon both economy of operation and safety to the public.

The side of a street intersection on which transit vehicles should stop to load and discharge passengers, to the greatest advantage of all, cannot be determined directly because of the number of variables entering into the conditions surrounding each type of vehicle and each intersection. There is no one simple formula.

Much confused thinking on the subject of near-side versus far-side stops is due to the habit, in the past, of combining in a single study the question of streetcars, trolley coaches, and motor buses. Two or three studies should be made: first, of the streetcar alone; second, of buses and trolley coaches without consideration of streetcars; and then a combination study based on the results of the first studies.

If the first study proves that the streetcar should make a near-side stop and the second study indicates the buses should make a far-side stop, what then is recommended when streetcars and buses use the same street? The prevailing custom seems to be to stop both vehicles on the near-side, even though the street is narrow and this plan blocks all movement. In such a case we have a block-to-block stop, and movement largely is under the control of the streetcar motorman instead of the traffic signals. If the street is wide and a safety island is provided for streetcar patrons, why not allow the buses to berth on the far-side, thereby breaking the jam and allowing progressive movement of other traffic? Why allow one element to "hog the road". Most discussions in the past, and by persons other than traffic engineers, seems to be traditionally slanted from the streetcar angle. I believe we all agree that for streetcars alone, the near-side stop is almost always proper; however, in a city having no street cars, the question is wide open for solution on a traffic engineering basis. After this point is resolved, the problem of combined streetcar, trolley coach, and bus operation on the same street can be approached properly.

It seems quite obvious that streetcars and trolley coaches making use of the center lanes only, and with or without safety islands, should preferably make a near-side stop. The question then is, What to do about trolley coaches and buses when berthing at the curb, first on streets having no streetcars, and second, on streets with streetcars? In each instance consideration should be given to whether the intersection is or is not signalized, and to the number of lanes, both parking and running, and to turning regulations.

RESIDENTIAL AREA

In the residential areas, on streets operating buses only, if blocks are short, a "skip-stop" program may be in vogue, allowing stops at alternate cross streets. When the bus stops on the near-side and if it is back 20 feet from the cross walk, which is the exception rather than the rule, although required by Indiana law, it will block the vision of pedestrians to on-coming vehicles on the same side of the street. Many pedestrian accidents are caused by buses stopping, at the curb, on the near-side.

With parkway conditions, as usually occurring, the near-side stop at the curb with the front door of the bus at the cross walk is quite a universal practice, and it does have the advantage of providing a safe place for passengers to enter or leave the bus. Many accidents to passengers are due to falling while entering or leaving the bus at unpaved parkway locations. Equal safety to the passenger cannot be provided at the far-side without suitable paving of the parkway.

BUSINESS DISTRICT

In the business district the most useful condition for the "far-side" stop is found where mass transportation vehicles are exclusively of the bus type.

In the case of streetcars using the center portion of the street and trolley coaches unable to reach the curb, the near-side stop is generally correct.

When a combination of vehicular types occurs, such as streetcars and buses, it is sometimes a benefit to make use of the near-side stop for streetcars and the far-side stop for the buses, especially if safety islands are provided and through and right-turn lanes are available. As the number of streetcars in service diminish, a much more generous use of curb space for bus berths becomes necessary.

Reduction in curb parking facilities usually meets with considerable disapproval on the part of private drivers. This resistance can be over-

come educationally from the point of view that the parking problem bears equal responsibility in the over-all traffic problem, and must be met squarely in order to aid in checking the declines of centralized business areas.

In congested areas on streets with bus service only, buses may be required to move in trains of not more than three, while aiming at a minimum headway of two cycles. These trains will endeavor to approach the intersection signals as the "last car" of the wave, or group, and will move through the intersection and berth on the "far-side" at the curb.

PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS TO "FAR-SIDE" STOPS

Objection 1. When the berth space is filled by buses on the far-side, the following bus is compelled to stop in the cross street, thereby blocking that street.

Answer. With "near-side" stop at curb, when curb parking of autos is permitted, any buses unable to enter the near-side bus-zone must halt in the second lane. This is very similar to the conditions prevailing with "far-side" stops, when the following bus, being unable to enter the berth, is required to wait on the near-side of the intersection, also in the second lane. When a minimum of three lanes are available, such conditions are tolerable and there is no interference with progressive movement.

Objection 2. At signalized intersections making use of far-side stops, double stops are often necessary.

Answer: With "near-side" stops, double stops are also often necessary when the bus starts from its berth too near the end of the green interval.

Objection 3. Buses pulling away from the curb are liable to angle collisions.

Answer: Buses should pull out from the curb after the wave has passed.

It is to be noted that all three of these objections seem to apply about equally to both sides of the intersection.

PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS TO "NEAR-SIDE" STOPS

Conflict with right and left turns is a distinct hazard, causing collisions and delaying bus operation, thereby interfering with all traffic, vehicular and pedestrian alike, and necessitating longer cycles. One transit company reports 50 percent of its intersection accidents are due to collisions between buses and right-turning autos.

With heavy right and left turning movements at any intersection, the conflict is very serious. If buses berth at "far-side", the right turns are made properly from the first lane, and conflict with left turns is lessened.

CONDITIONS BEST SUITED TO "FAR-SIDE" BUS STOPS

1. Buses to berth at the curb.
2. Street width ample, with a minimum of two running lanes each direction.
3. Flow control of buses.
4. Sufficient curb space to allow any bus of a train to leave the curb without interfering with others not ready to move.
5. Buses to leave the curb after traffic wave has passed.

The curb space required to berth one 40-passenger bus at the "near-side" is 50 feet, while at the "far-side" 60 feet is required.

There can be no hard and fast rule governing location of bus stops; we will continue to have "near-side", "far-side", and "mid-block" stops. The traffic engineer will, however, continue his study from point to point in his effort to improve the over-all operating conditions for the purposes of economy, safety, and comfort to the users of our streets, be they transit riders, drivers, or pedestrians.

Each intersection should be separately studied and proper disposition made of the particular type of vehicle involved, irrespective of any general "near-side" or "far-side" theory for the entire city.