

Rapid transit can also make expensive street widenings unnecessary, by making possible the taking of all or most of the electric cars off the surface of the street, and carrying people entirely underground, as was most notably done in Boston with Tremont Street and Boylston Street, although the mistake was made in that case of merely putting the surface cars in a subway, instead of carrying the passengers in trains. This matter of relieving street congestion is a very valuable feature of rapid transit, and one which town planners have as yet almost wholly neglected. There are several cities where extensive new street construction and street widenings have been recommended, and where practically all the benefits needed could be far better obtained by the removal of all surface cars from the streets, the cities gaining not only great relief for vehicles, but also the immeasurable advantage of rapid transit, which no mere amount of street widening could bring.

How to get rapid transit properly appreciated is a very difficult matter. Existing traction companies are too much interested in making money to do things for the benefit of the city as a whole. Real estate owners merely want a line to the property they are interested in. Store keepers generally want trade to stay where it is, and to have all cars pass their doors. City officials, in the United States at least, are too often thinking of how to be re-elected or attain higher office, or help friends who got them in, or please the corporations, rather than how to afford the greatest unity to their city, the best housing, the lowest rents.

Canadian cities have set such a high standard for city government, that it would be a fine thing if some one of them would have a really thorough transit investigation made, one which would set an ideal for other American cities. Such an investigation should consider all the related aspects of town planning, even if made by itself. It should consider the housing situation; how people can live in single houses in healthy locations, at reasonable rents; how to get quickly to and from work in any part of a city. It should consider the business situation; how the business section needs extension and in what direction; and how best to coax it in the right direction, as with rapid transit. It should consider the location of factories, and how to connect them best with workmen's homes, and, if need be, how to encourage the location of factories in better localities, or the homes in better places, for it may be as in Pittsburg that there are people living near hot, stifling, and smoky factories who ought to be located out in the fresh air somewhere, and have new transportation provided to reach work. The accessibility of educational institutions should be considered, of parks, museums, etc.

The experience of other cities must be carefully considered in any investigation, because the principles of transit are so little understood, even by those who rank as authorities, and because every city, both European and American, which has already attempted rapid transit, has made mistakes which need to be avoided. Finally, in making plans every possible scheme should be devised, and every possible idea and criticism obtained, from the public as well as experts, in order that nothing of possible merit may be overlooked. And then no one plan should be adopted without long consideration of all the others.