

Target Field Traffic Management Action Plan
April 2010 Traffic Debriefing Summary



Photo courtesy of Bergerson Photography

May 17, 2010

Prepared by
City of Minneapolis
Department of Public Works
Traffic & Parking Services Division

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Introduction

This is an update to the *Target Field Traffic Management Action Plan* from March, 2010. Numerous partners have made observations over the course of the last twelve Target Field events. We anticipate that on-street changes, as a result of these observations, will continue until the Downtown Traffic Management Team is confident that major modifications to the Plan are no longer necessary. The City of Minneapolis has developed this document as a reliable resource for future Target Field events.

1) Signal Timing

Signal timing plans for these events have required few modifications. Once roadway closures and parking restrictions are established, these timing plans will be finalized and implemented based on day, time and dual-event criteria. *Overall, the signal timing has been a successful mitigation measure.* Observations have concluded that a few future challenges exist, which can hopefully be mitigated with minimal funding.

2) Traffic Management Staffing

Staffing experience has been shared at the briefing meetings. Regular attendance at these meetings has included MPD, Metro Transit police, Police Reserves, Metro Transit Operations, SEH (signal timing), Target Center, Twins, Ampco (ramp manager), ABC Ramps, MnDOT, DID, City Communications and the Downtown Management Team. These meetings were initially held before every home game, but are now held prior to every homestand. The meetings have been very beneficial, and contributions are being made by all of those in attendance.



Staffing levels are currently being evaluated for possible reductions. These reductions would apply to both Public Works and Regulatory Services. It is apparent that traffic associated with weekend day games and weekday night games can be accommodated with some reduced level of staffing. This would include reductions in Traffic Control Agents (TCA's), Downtown Management Team, and sign crews. Regulatory Services and Public Works are scheduled to discuss staff reductions on May 4th, 2010. Public Works plans to formally request funding from MnDOT for TCA's to manage intersections that are directly impacted by ABC Ramp traffic.

Public Works has requested the assistance of Police Reserves through the month of May to manage the LRT intersections on 5th St. N. (at 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th Avenues) in order to meet the need until long-term staffing levels are identified.

Metro Transit Police staffing of LRT intersections has been reduced from two or three officers per intersection, to one officer per intersection.



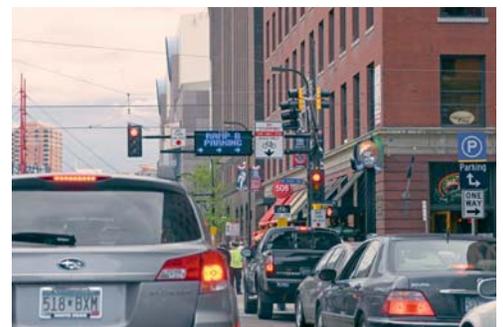
Management of the charter bus permit zones has been a huge, unforeseen task. Charter bus counts for weekday day games are approaching 100 buses. Planning for these buses is somewhat difficult because not all charter buses are reserving permits, and not all drivers are familiar with downtown Minneapolis. ABC Ramps, which issues the permits, has staffed the zones to provide on-site sales and directions to other zones. This staffing effort is likely to be reduced, once charter buses become familiar with the system and zones underneath Ramps "B" and "C" are opened for direct access from I-394.

Minneapolis Police Officers have become more involved than anticipated, due to the number of ticket scalpers that have been impeding pedestrian traffic and causing safety issues on the street. MPD has addressed the situation, which reduced the safety issues significantly. MPD has been providing the names of officers to call, if issues arise with scalpers.

3) Variable Message Signs (VMS)

Observations of these signs have shown a positive effect on traffic resulting from the use. Real-time information placed on these signs has an immediate impact on driver behavior, reducing circulation and frustration. These signs, which are on the freeway system and on the city grid system, provide parking information and alternate parking locations when ramps become full. These signs also provide exiting information to freeway access points, which improve post-game traffic circulation. Recent sign installations have communicated through a wireless internet service, which has proven more reliable than the older direct, sightline communications, and is less expensive compared to direct connection through fiber or copper. The use of these signs has been hugely successful, which has prompted the Downtown Management Team and ABC Ramps to discuss possible future installations. This will help traffic flow and provide proper guidance on parking ramp status.

MnDOT has scheduled the replacement of the electronic ABC Ramp status signs in the I-394 corridor for the end of May. These signs have not been functional in over fifteen years. The new signs will be full-color matrix and provide information on ramp status prior to exiting directly to ramps from I-394. The Downtown Management Team and ABC Ramps, recognizing the success of the signs on the City grid system, took action to place a portable VMS sign within the I-394 corridor that displays ramp status information. The portable sign information



display is managed via wireless internet through a web-based system and is being paid for by MnDOT. Since the portable sign has been in place, management of the ramp traffic has greatly improved.

Public Works will start testing Dynamic Parking Lane (DPL) on 1st Ave. N. starting May 17, 2010. Hopefully, the DPL will be operational for the Twins series against the Milwaukee Brewers on May 21st, 2010.

4) Roadway Closures

6th St. N. (2nd Ave. N. to 1st Ave. N.)

This closure has not been implemented since the exhibition games. Restricting access, and minimal traffic (pedestrian and vehicle) on 6th St. has not justified this closure. TCA's have successfully managed the intersection of 1st Ave. N. and 6th St. with 6th open. This closure will no longer be considered, unless conditions change.

1st Ave. N. (4th St. N. to 6th St. N.)

This closure has been the most complex issue of the Action Plan. Varying use of 1st Ave. N., both by pedestrians and vehicles, has not identified a predictable pattern. Because of this, this closure will likely take a few more games to evaluate.



The Downtown Management Team has experimented, based on game times and days, leaving 1st Ave. N. open. Continued evaluation will require the following:

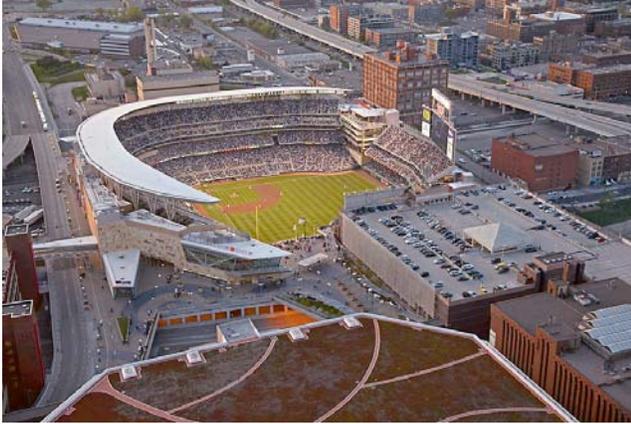
1st Avenue North will not close for weekend day and weekday night games (excluding Fridays) unless conditions change.

The hesitancy with concluding the value of this closure for Friday, Saturday and Sunday night games is the overlapping pedestrian activity of a Target Field event and Warehouse District nightlife. The first opportunity to experiment with 1st Ave. N. open during a these times is Friday, May 7th. Observations will enable a determination on the closure of 1st Ave. N. short term and possibly long term. Further evaluation on the closure of 1st Ave. N. will be required for dual-event situations. Target Center does have a sold-out concert in June, with start and end times matching a Target Field game.

5) Parking Restrictions

A sensitive balance between local business needs and gameday-traffic required modifications to parking restrictions and parking time limits. Within a week after opening day, Traffic and Parking Services received approval to change the time limit of metered parking within the Warehouse District from four hours to two hours. This change provided local businesses with available on-street parking that would otherwise be occupied by Target Field fans. Certain sections of 1st Ave. N were also evaluated to restore parking during event times.





ON-STREET PARKING

Based on the Downtown Management Team's evaluation, the following decisions have been made:

No Changes to Peak Period (Rush Hour) Parking Restrictions

Opening Day (Previous) Parking Restrictions (all games)

- No Parking 1st Ave. N. (Washington to 8th St.)
- No Parking 6th St. (both sides, Hennepin to 1st Ave. N.)

Current Parking Restrictions

- No Parking 1st Ave N. (3rd St. N to 8th St. N. - all weekday night games, except Fridays)
 - ★ Parking restored, 1st Ave. N. (Washington to 3rd St.)
- No Parking 1st Ave. N. (both sides, 6th St to 8th St., and SB 1st Ave. N. (3rd St. to 6th St. N. - weekend day games)
 - ★ Parking restored 1st Ave N. (Washington to 3rd St.)
 - ★ Parking restored 1st Ave. N. (northbound, 6th to 3rd St. N.)
- No Parking 6th St. (both sides, Hennepin to 1st Ave. N.)
- No Parking 7th St. (south side, Hennepin to 1st Ave. N.)
 - ★ Parking removed

Future Evaluation (May 8th)

- No Parking Restrictions on 1st Ave. N. (weekend day games)
 - ★ Restore all parking on 1st Ave. N

The management of the on-street parking restrictions has been extensive. Once the Dynamic Parking Lane is deployed, it is expected that this effort will decrease.

“Parking compliance on 1st Avenue North has been outstanding during events. Over the course of twelve events, there has been one ticket and one tow from 1st Avenue North, and that was during the first exhibition game.”

6) Miscellaneous

Taxi Zones

Taxis have been one of two significant impediments to efficient traffic flow. Taxis continually drop off and pick up in undesignated locations, causing traffic disruption and safety issues. To provide more accessibility for taxis to Target Field fans, a taxi zone was created on 7th St. from Gate 14 to Twins Way. This zone accommodates 24 cabs and has been heavily utilized. This has reduced the number of taxi violations, but violations still occur. Staff has been working with MPD on this issue. Initially a taxi zone was set up on 5th Street from 1st to Hennepin. This zone was underutilized and a challenge to manage, as taxis were driving on the LRT track bed and passenger vehicles were getting trapped in taxi queues.



Charter Buses

Charter buses are the other significant impediment. Unpermitted buses have a designated location in Ramp "A" to drop off and pick up. However, this location is minimally used, and dropping off in undesignated areas causes traffic disruption and safety concerns. These buses frequently carry school children, amplifying the need for safe drop off/ pick up locations. Staff has had many conversations with the drivers of these buses. The typical response has been that the bus company did not supply them any information on where to pick up or drop off, and that they have no financial resources to purchase a \$20 permit. The Downtown Management Team has concluded that a more visible and closer bus pick up and drop off is needed. Twins Way will be

temporarily designated for bus pick up and drop off. This location is easy to find, and is close to Target Field gates. Staff will continue to evaluate.

Bicycles

Target Field has over 300 bike parking spaces within a 600 foot radius. Bicycling as a mode of travel has been a great success at Target Field. The success is to the point where additional bike parking racks are needed to accommodate demand. The City, MnDOT and the Twins are in discussions to put up additional temporary racks on the Plaza starting with the May 3rd game against Detroit. Also, MnDOT and the City are coordinating the placement of a bike corral for select Twins games.



7) Summary

As mentioned earlier in this report, challenges do exist. Management of taxis and unpermitted charter buses will be ongoing. As patterns evolve and become consistent, this challenge will be reduced, but likely never eliminated. Dual-events, involving the Target Center or the Metrodome, have yet to be tested. Target Center has a daytime motivational event on May 26th, which is offset from a Twins night game. A sold-out concert on June 29th has matching start- and end-times as an evening Twins game. Additionally, Target Field will have two dual-events with the Vikings at the Metrodome in September.

The planning effort, ongoing for the last two years, has paid off greatly. The communications plan, along with the multimodal features of Target Field, has produced an on-street traffic situation that has been acceptable to a wide variety of users. City Council support and Public Works upper management identified funding to implement new traffic management strategies. They have entrusted staff to plan, manage, observe, and change what was needed to implement these strategies.

Successes are great in number, and pending a few more tests in the upcoming months with dual Target Center events, will be one of the greater cooperative efforts of Public Works. Traffic management is linked to many aspects of the Action Plan and other stakeholder initiatives. Below are a few of the successes that have made a positive impact in the management of traffic.

Successes

- Communications/Media Events/Press Releases
 - ★ Destination Target Field
 - ★ City's Communication Department
 - ★ Metro Transit's communication effort
- Traffic Control Agents
 - ★ Managing pedestrian flow
 - ★ Preventing gridlock
- Variable Message Signs
 - ★ Reduce circulation
 - ★ Providing parking status
 - ★ Wayfinding to freeway access points
- Signal Timing
 - ★ Different timing plan for game days
 - ★ Providing additional time for key traffic movements
- Ambassadors (providing information face to face)
 - ★ Metro Transit
 - ★ Twins
 - ★ ABC Ramps
 - ★ Downtown Improvement District

- Mass Transit
 - ★ LRT
 - ★ NorthStar Rail
 - ★ Route 679 buses
 - ★ Supplemental buses for LRT
- Bicycles
 - ★ Quantity of riders reducing traffic pressure
 - ★ Access to the Ballpark

In conclusion, traffic routine has always been an expected result of Target Field. This routine is starting to take shape which has been for the most part a very smooth process. Observations and staff commitment to traffic efficiency will continue until such time routine is fully developed. Overall, on-street congestion has been present, but with minimal impact because of the short durations. When traffic conditions go unnoticed in the public's eye, it is a sign of success.

