

BLOCKS ON THE LINE.

PROBLEMS THE STREET RAILWAY COMPANIES HAVE TO MEET.

THE ENORMOUS TRAFFIC IN THE "RUSH HOURS"—HOW RAINY WEATHER CAUSES DELAY.

The man who waits in the drenching rain for the car that does not come and the man who waits in the car with other cars in front and more cars back of the one in which he is waiting, all standing still because "something is wrong," know that a block on the road has a depressing influence on the spirits of people who are cheerful under ordinary circumstances.

In fine weather and at hours when to many people time is not particularly valuable, and when a few minutes will make little difference in the day's plans, there are seldom surface car blockades. When it rains, when the wind helps to make life in the street a burden and an open umbrella a practical joke, and at times when people are rushing home, or when they wish to do so, for dinner, the theatre or other entertainments, or to fill social engagements, when every minute counts—that is the time when the surface cars often stop short. Then they give passengers an opportunity to test their powers of self-control, and railroad employees to show how loyal they can be to their employers by refusing information as to the cause of delay. Those are the occasions when passengers vow that they will "never, never, patronize the surface line again," and they usually keep the pledge until it rains again, and then, to save the little walk to the elevated station, they take the surface cars again. When the car becomes stalled once more they wonder if a surface car ever makes a trip without an accident.

DELAYS INFREQUENT, SAYS VREELAND.

"If the complaining passenger rode with us every evening," said H. H. Vreeland, the president of the Metropolitan road, "he would know that the delays of which he complains are not the rule, but the infrequent exception, and if the blocks happen on rainy nights it is only natural. The traffic is greater than most people know at ordinary times, but when it rains during the evening rush hour it is simply enormous. People who in fair weather walk to the nearest elevated station or walk home rush for the surface cars when it rains, and get to their homes by means of transfers. It takes longer to get on and off the cars because of umbrellas and wraps that must be managed. Then the pavements are in bad condition, and horses slip and block the way. On the asphalt streets teams avoid the smooth part, and get between the tracks, where there is block pavement, and frequently an obstinate driver makes many cars run slowly. Then the transfer stations are crowded, and disposing of waiting passengers also creates delay. Unloading a ton of coal or a few boxes or the breakdown of a hand cart may cause fifty cars to be stalled and hundreds of passengers to swear about the poor methods of the surface line."

In the rush hours, from 7:30 to 10 a. m. and from 5:30 to 6:30 p. m., the cars run so closely together that they must keep moving rapidly to prevent a block. On the Fourth-ave. line they run twenty seconds apart south of Eighty-sixth-st.; in Broadway, south of Twenty-third-st., the intervals are about fifteen seconds, and on the Sixth-ave. line the cars are thirty seconds apart. At other times of the day the "headway" is greater, but the number of cars in use is about the same, though they are distributed differently. On the Sixth-ave. and Amsterdam-ave. lines there are 200 cars; the Madison-ave. line has about 225 cars, and the cable system, which includes Broadway, Columbus-ave. and Lexington-ave., has 450 cars.

A BUSY CORNER.

There is probably no better place in New-York to see what a block on the surface road means, and how easily many cars may be brought to a standstill, than at the Twenty-third-st. crossing of Fourth-ave. Every thirty-five seconds a Twenty-third-st. crosstown car crosses the track; every forty-five seconds a Twenty-third-st. car bound from the Thirty-fourth-st. ferry crosses; the Lexington-ave. cars cross the track every thirty seconds, and every ninety seconds a "green horsecar" crosses. At the same time Madison-ave. cars come along from both directions at the rate of three a minute, and if anything happens to obstruct the crossing for five minutes seventy cars are brought to a standstill, and traffic cannot be brought to its normal condition in less than fifteen or twenty minutes.

Some figures showing the amount of business done by the surface roads were shown to illustrate the difficulties against which the cars must battle.

"For the six months ending December 31," said Mr. Vreeland, "the surface cars of New York carried 77,738,544 passengers, an increase of about 11,000,000 over the business for the same months in 1898; and you can well understand that with a business of such proportions we do our best to give the best service possible. In the time mentioned we carried on the Fourth-ave. line, 7,499,530; on the Fifty-ninth-st. line, 8,193,826; Eighth-ave., 7,467,464; Broadway, 4,030,212, and Lexington-ave., 5,557,812. Every line is closely observed, reports are made showing how many 'car miles' are covered on each line, how many passengers are carried and how many transfer and how many cash fares are collected. A close record is also kept as to the fluctuation of traffic during the day, and these reports are the basis upon which we make our time schedules."

Traffic sheets which are made from these reports show at what times in the day or night the travel is the greatest, and a reproduction of one of these sheets is published herewith to show the fluctuation. The heavy lines indicate travel on cash fares, the dotted lines denote "transfer" traffic. It will be seen that while in the heaviest hour, on the Fourth-ave. division, between 7 and 8 o'clock in the morning, the number of passengers is only 6,750, the heavy evening hour—between 5 and 6 o'clock—reaches 10,250. The people come from their homes to the business district at all hours from 6 until 10, but the great majority goes home between 5 and 6 o'clock, and traffic jumps from 6,000 to

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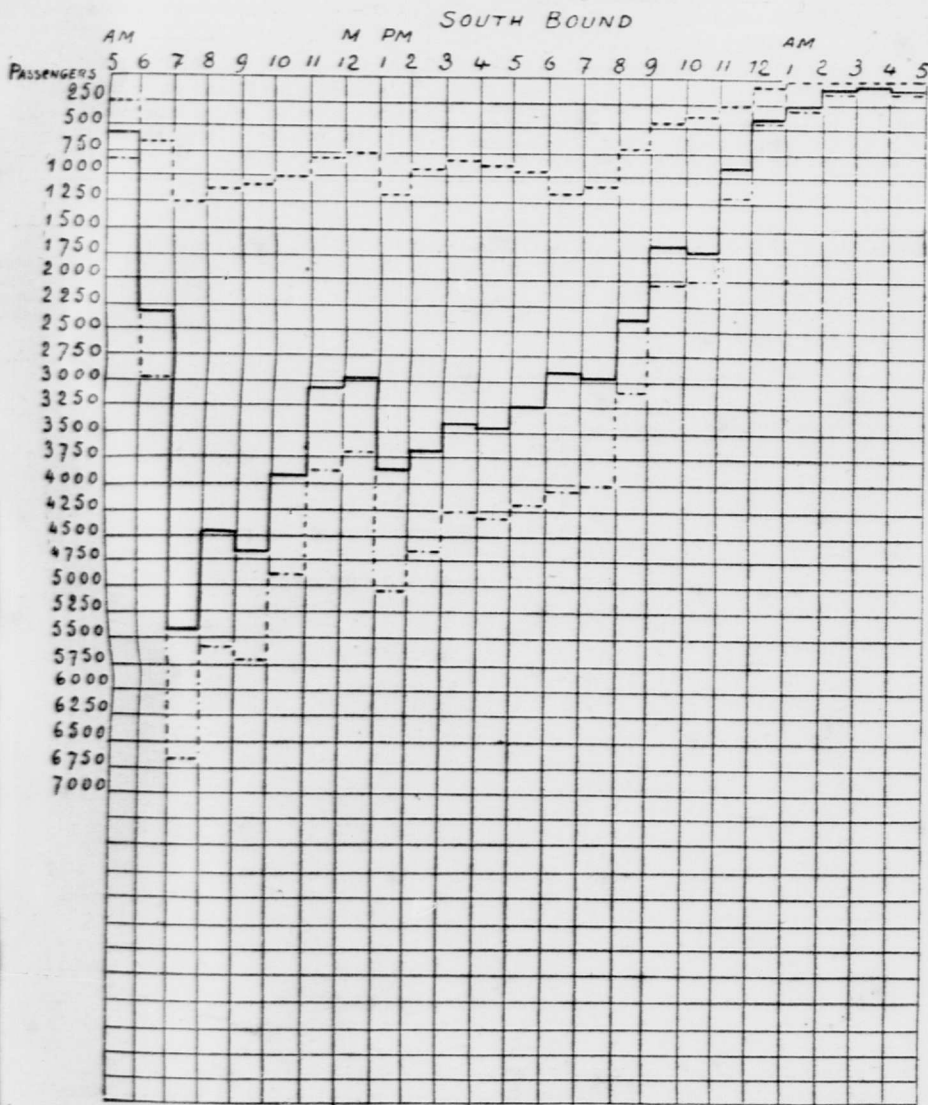
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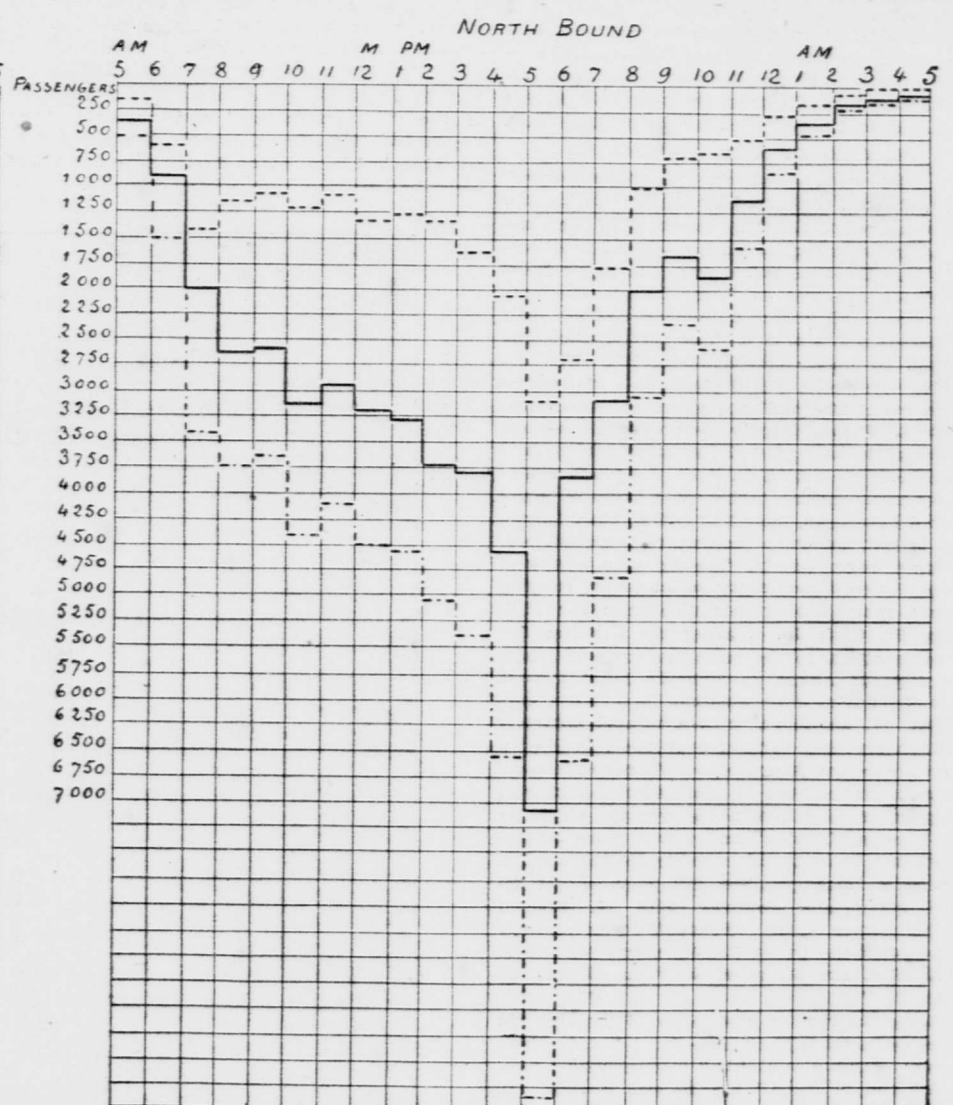
"In order to appreciate fully what it means to operate the surface roads in New-York," said Mr. Vreeland, "and to keep things moving, one should know what we are expected to do. There are in the United States about 184,000

miles of steam railroads, and on these roads there were carried last year about 514,983,000 passengers. The Metropolitan Street Railway has about 284 miles of tracks, and carried on these about 255,835,000 passengers, nearly one-half the number carried on the 184,000 miles of steam railroads."



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