



7 Must Do Things To Successfully Manage Traffic At Large Events

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While visitors to any large-scale event, whether sporting, concert, or a seasonal event, are looking for good entertainment, getting there shouldn't be a nightmare. The traffic engineer's challenge is how to make traffic at these large events manageable and keep the patrons of these events safe. Here are a few key items to keep in mind when considering large event traffic:



Components of an Event Management Traffic Plan

1. Well-Defined Access Driveway.

Traffic needs to move safely and efficiently off the public road and to the site's parking areas. Consider how to keep the flow of traffic moving internally to avoid back-ups on the highway and conflicts with attendees walking around the site.

Some options are channelizers to separate directions of travel, fencing on each side of the driveway to keep pedestrians from the entrance/exit area, and parking attendants to assist motorists to the parking area and even to their specific stall. On-site personnel, can also be used as crosswalk guards at key conflict points.

2. Clearly-Marked Parking Spot Indications.

Many sites use a gravel or grass lot that doesn't have permanent stall markings. Even in the best weather, drivers can park haphazardly without guidance. The result is inefficient use of parking with the drive aisle widths often getting reduced between parked cars. Providing parking indications, such as flags, cones, or other visible items, to clearly mark the parking spots helps drivers properly align their cars. If possible, event personnel can direct drivers to their specific spot.



3. Street/Pedestrian Lighting.

Often events occur during the evening hours or at night. To increase safety, entrances and exits, particularly where any tours or attractions start and end, should be well lit to improve the safety for everyone. The parking areas should also have a lighted pathway if possible to guide people to the front door. Getting a sprained ankle or something worse on the walk to or from the car will decrease the enjoyment of any attraction.

4. Personal Safety Equipment.

Employees and volunteers that help direct traffic and pedestrians around the site need to be seen. We recommend those individuals who are assisting with parking to, at a minimum, wear reflective safety vests with badges or other clearly identifiable nametags so drivers know who to follow. Flags, flashlights, and a host of other visibility enhancers are available for any parking attendants, security, or other personnel that will be working in the busy traffic areas. Not only will that help these people be seen, it also provides a factor of authority for attendees to follow.

5. Safe Routes and Intersection Movements.

Some sites are in rural areas or a sleepy suburb location where traffic is lower for the other 95% of the year. A highway access intersection that works well as a side-street stop controlled intersection for the normal traffic may have issues during large events, with large delays and potential safety risks. Even in urban areas, increasing traffic volumes by a significant percentage can overwhelm a corridor's capacity.

Consider whether full access intersections can be reduced, consolidating some movements at traffic signals or roundabouts. Temporary barrels and signs can easily create 3/4-access or right in/right out intersections, improving safety. Some roads may also have the ability to offer reversible lanes, increasing capacity during the primary entry and exit times without widening roadways in both directions. Also, consider if routes can be sub-divided, have westbound traffic directed one way while eastbound traffic uses a different route.

6. Roadway Signs.

Traffic control signs are generally necessary to direct the event traffic and warn regular commuters of the conditions that are a change from normal. Warning signs can be used to advise of upcoming congestion, direct highway thru traffic and/or event turning traffic to specific lanes, and re-direct drivers to an alternative route if a road is closed or intersection limited. Changeable message signs, adjustable speed limit signs, and other lighted signs provide a distinction from other signs in the area. Don't forget to account for existing signs, providing sufficient spacing between signs for readability and covering signs not applicable.



7. Website Information.

Providing as much up-front information is a must these days. Traffic flow tends to move better with less frustration if drivers have expectations for themselves and others. At a minimum, parking and route information should be available on a website. Lots of other social media options are out there to let drivers know the changes in the transportation network from existing, to expect some congestion, and to encourage carpooling, transit, and other alternative forms of travel.