

SPECIAL EVENT MANAGEMENT

Description

Special events (sporting events, concerts, fairs, conventions, etc.) cause high levels of congestion as attendees overload street and highway networks adjacent to the venue. This sudden spike of traffic can negatively affect surrounding traffic operations. Unlike unplanned events, agencies and organizers can easily coordinate a mitigation plan and deploy the proper resources to minimize the effects on normal traffic operation.

Special events cause overcrowded primary routes, as people consider those to be the fastest and easiest way to reach their destination. Spreading the traffic over the entire network, however, is the best way to reduce congestion on all roads. Planners often distribute traffic onto alternate routes with the use of pre-event publicity, dynamic message boards, or road closures.

Bus and light-rail services are also crucial for special event management, as these systems can carry large passenger loads and remove large number of vehicles from the road. Transit service can be increased during the high-volume periods before and after the event to encourage the use of public transportation. The services can also be provided at a park-and-ride location to use off-site parking when the event is held downtown or facility parking is extremely limited.

Planners and practitioners can produce standardized plans for commonly occurring events to provide minimum congestion with minimal effort. The purpose of special events management is to reduce congestion on all roads surrounding an event facility to improve travel times for the event customers and other drivers on the road.



Cost:	●●○○○
Time:	Short
Impact:	Spot
Who:	City/Transit Agency
Hurdles:	Coordination

Target Market

Large Venues: Convention Centers, Sports Arenas and Stadiums, Theaters, Convention Hotels
 Concert halls, convention centers, and arenas are sometimes located in close proximity to a freeway or other high-speed, high-volume arterial that allows easy access to the facility. Others can be located in central business districts with road networks that may be historic and have limited right of way. Those roads often experience a majority of the congestion caused by special events. Using underutilized entrance and exit routes and incorporating other temporary capacity techniques reduces demand and increases capacity on the primary routes.

Event Planners

Event planning companies are also a great target market. Working with event planners to coordinate transportation and alternate routes

to and from regular events is the best way to mitigate congestion during the event. Examples include music festivals, annual conventions, and sporting events, such as marathons.

The goal of successful event management is to transfer as much event traffic onto alternate underutilized routes or modes, allowing normal traffic flow on primary routes. This requires route information to be distributed as thoroughly as possible.

How Will This Help?

- Decreased congestion can increase safety at the event location and on the surrounding street network. Large speed variations can cause crashes on congested roads. Redistributing the traffic onto other routes and encouraging patrons to use public transit increases the person-moving capability on all roads and decreases the likelihood of a crash caused by differential speeds between the vehicles on the road.
- Special event management can improve traffic flow for both event and regular traffic. Increasing transit usage and directing traffic onto alternate routes limits the traffic entering the primary route in the area. Dispersing the traffic onto other roads and routes distributes the traffic evenly on the surrounding network.
- Planning and spreading the traffic onto different roads can decrease delay for all users. The improved traffic flow created by redistributing the event traffic on other routes reduces congestion.

Implementation Examples

Special event transportation management is best utilized for regularly scheduled events but can be applied to one-time events as well. The best way to plan ahead is to attend regularly scheduled planning meetings with city representatives, who typically approve event

permits. Transportation representatives should be present at each meeting, where information about event dates, times, and street closures may be shared. During the event planning, transportation representatives can work with local city departments, including the police, to map out alternative routes and multimodal transportation options.

Application Techniques and Principles

There are several key criteria the Federal Highway Administration handbook says should be considered for special event traffic planning. Coordinators should understand the potential problems they can encounter in their area. These situations include the possibilities of limited road capacity available to access the facility, limited parking at the facility, the lack of alternate routes for additional event traffic or through traffic, limited infrastructure available to track and monitor traffic, and the overall area from which the event is drawing people.

The agencies should monitor the roadways with mobile devices such as video cameras and portable traffic signals. The local officials should also utilize automated information systems like dynamic message boards, lane control, and parking management. Typical programs include planned road closures to guide vehicles onto roads that can handle large volumes, manual traffic controls to adjust to changing traffic characteristics, and signal retiming to increase intersection capacity. The plan may also incorporate temporary capacity improvements such as left-turn restrictions and reversible lanes to improve the capacity of the roads used to access and exit the venue.

The traffic managers, local government, and event organizers should work in conjunction with each other for a successful management program. These groups should develop an integrated plan to handle the projected traffic demands and ensure that the plan is implemented properly. The management team should evaluate the overall effect that this large



traffic influx may have on the local area and hold stakeholder meetings before the event to ensure everyone is coordinated to the fullest extent.

The team should also be equipped with the ability to communicate well between the different agencies. This group should continuously monitor the traffic on the event day and modify the plan for real-time situations.

Issues

Though there are few hurdles to implementing an event management strategy, a lack of interagency coordination can severely hinder its deployment. Public agencies responsible for traffic control and parking should coordinate with event staff and private stakeholders to ensure all parties are coordinated. Special consideration should be given to integrating parking with the traffic flow, separating pedestrians from auto traffic, and traffic control on neighborhood streets.

Who Is Responsible?

The responsibility of planning, coordinating, and implementing special event traffic management typically falls on the local governments (cities), the transportation providers, and the event planners. All of these groups should communicate and discuss what equipment and information is needed for the plan and evaluate the available road network and public transportation services.

Project Timeframe

The project timeframe differs depending on the size of the event and the infrastructure and policies in place. The group should meet multiple times before the day of the event to evaluate all personnel and equipment needed for the event and discuss the projected effects the traffic will have on the surrounding area. A typical special event management plan can be developed in a minimum of few weeks, but implementation depends on the size and scope of the event.

Cost

The cost of a special event management plan depends on the size of the event. The cost may include street closure signage, officers to manage traffic, additional buses, and/or trains for alternative modes, dynamic signage, and public information about the plan.

Data Needs

Planners should gauge the amount of data to successfully develop and implement a special events management program based on the event and the transportation plan. The group needs the local traffic and transit data, the projected attendance of the event, and historical data from count stations that are associated with special events in the area. The organizers should also review the available signal technologies and timings to determine if system optimization, or improvement, is beneficial for the area around the event facility.

Special Event Management Best Practices

- Type of Location: Medium and large events; Events in constrained areas.
- Agency Practices: Coordination and collaboration between several groups; monitoring and response during the event.
- Frequency of Reanalysis: Plans should be re-worked before each event based on the expected situations; participants and agencies should also be de-briefed after each event to identify elements that worked well and areas needing improvement.
- Supporting Policies or Actions Needed: Public transportation service that can be expanded to meet travel needs; roadway operations agencies that can address unusual demands.
- Complementary Strategies: Several traffic management and travel option strategies can be useful.

For More Information

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