

VII -- RAIL, AIR, WATER AND TRUCK TRANSPORTATION

RAIL, AIR, WATER AND TRUCK TRANSPORTATION

The manner in which raw materials, finished products and passengers are transported from place to place in the United States has changed profoundly within a single generation. The railroads, while still indispensable, no longer dominate the transportation picture to the same extent as in the era before the motor vehicle and the airplace emerged as serious competitors. Likewise, water transportation now occupies a relatively minor role as compared to its position in the field a number of years ago.

These changing trends in transportation have affected the economic development and the physical form of our cities in many important ways. The flexibility of truck operation in contrast to the rigidity of railroad tracks, yards and terminals has increased the area of potential industrial development. The greatly increased use of the automobile to transport workers to and from their employment has encouraged the decentralization of industrial plants. Industries are no longer limited to a location adjoining a railroad siding or near public transit facilities.

The ultimate effect of air transportation on urban development is yet unknown. Its phenomenal development since World War II, however, clearly indicates it will play an increasingly important role in the transportation field both in moving passengers and transporting express and freight.

The State Barge Canal is an asset to Utica which should become more valuable in the future, if properly developed.

If Utica is to develop and prosper in the future, it must have adequate terminals and facilities for each of the four forms of transportation - rail, air, water and truck. Their location must be coordinated with the other elements of the City Plan in order to avoid conflicts and mutual interferences.

It is the purpose of this chapter to consider each of the four transportation media and to suggest ways and means in which they may more efficiently fit into the pattern of the future city.

(A) PRESENT RAILROAD FACILITIES AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

The City of Utica is served by four railroads: the New York Central System; the West Shore Railroad (subsidiary of the New York Central System); the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad; and the New York, Ontario and Western Railway. (See Plate 49).

The facilities of these railroads for handling both freight and passenger traffic are well arranged, and, in general, are ample to provide for the present, as well as the foreseeable future. There are no major problems that require immediate solution.

The railroads serve 138 on-track industries, and 118 off-track industries, representing 78 percent of the plants in the Utica industrial district. An abundance of suitable sites are available along all of the railroads, making possible considerable properly located industrial expansion in the city.

Both the anthracite and bituminous coal fields are reached by these railroads, so that this fuel is readily available for industrial and domestic use at Utica.

The industries receive fuel for their own use or for distribution to other users in the district. In addition, they depend upon the railroads for delivery of the raw products they require, and for the transportation of their finished products.

Numerous industries and commercial establishments depend upon the railroads for delivery of less than carloads of merchandise, which are handled through local railroad freight houses.

It is apparent that the railroads are a vital element in the growth and prosperity of Utica and the Mohawk Valley.

Proposed Improvements

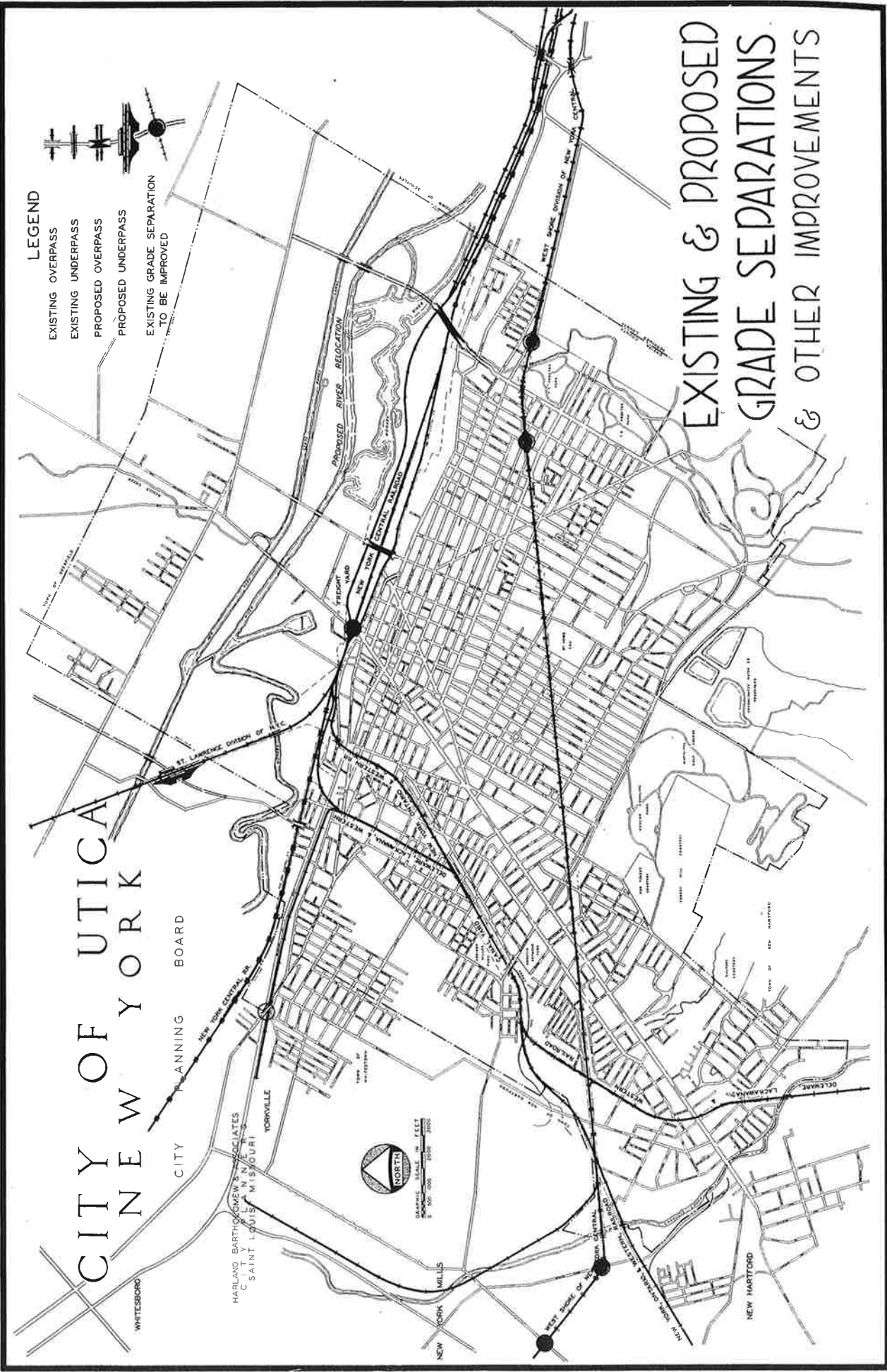
New York Central

The Major Street Plan contemplates two new highway crossings of the New York Central System's properties, as shown on Plate 50.

LEGEND

- EXISTING OVERPASS
- EXISTING UNDERPASS
- PROPOSED OVERPASS
- PROPOSED UNDERPASS
- EXISTING GRADE SEPARATION TO BE IMPROVED

EXISTING & PROPOSED GRADE SEPARATIONS & OTHER IMPROVEMENTS



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CITY ENGINEERS
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

The proposed extension of Culver Avenue across the New York Central to connect with the proposed New York Throughway should start to elevate at about Dwyer Avenue. At the structural steel plant, the alignment should swing to the east and rise over Broad Street. The present surface connection of Culver Avenue to Broad Street should remain. The new viaduct structure should continue north-eastwardly in order to avoid disruption of the New York Central Engine Terminals. This alignment will also locate the crossing of the railroad yard close to the throat of the yard, thereby reducing the structural span lengths and the cost to a minimum. Planning details will have to be worked out jointly with the railroad company's engineers.

The proposed extension of Mohawk Street across the New York Central to connect with Leland Avenue will carry traffic from Albany Street, as well as from Park Avenue. Long span trusses will be required and negotiation with the railroad for location of columns and piers will be necessary.

The structure should clear over Broad Street, so that the flow of traffic on the overpass will not be impeded by traffic on Broad Street, or by the railroad movements on the industrial lead running along Broad Street. Park Avenue traffic would turn east on Broad Street, pass under the new structure, and right turn on a curved approach to the Mohawk-Leland Street structure.

Just west of the City limits a potentially dangerous grade crossing exists where Cleaver Road crosses the tracks of the St. Lawrence division of the New York Central. The close proximity of the Barge Canal to this crossing complicates its separation and suggests the necessity of relocating the highway several hundred feet to the east. The proposed relocation will eliminate several abrupt turns now existing on Cleaver Road and should make it possible for the highway to pass under the Railroad nearly at right angles. A new bridge over the Canal also would be a necessary part of this improvement. Topography is favorable to the grade separation and as

the property involved in the new location is unimproved, the cost of the improvement would not be excessive.

West Shore Railroad

Elimination of the grade crossings of the West Shore Line would be an enormous undertaking and cannot be economically justified either at the present time or in the foreseeable future. The volume of train traffic is so small and the trains travel so slowly that there is little danger to vehicular traffic or pedestrians passing over the tracks at the numerous grade crossings. Likewise, there are no serious delays to vehicular traffic at any time. As long as industries exist along the West Shore Line, rail service will have to be continued. The amount of rail traffic probably will not increase, however, as opportunities for industrial expansion are limited by scarcity of suitable sites. There is much less rail traffic now than there was twenty years ago.

If unforeseen circumstances should result in a substantial increase in rail traffic in the future, it might be necessary to consider separation of grades only at the proposed major streets, and at other streets where the volume of local traffic warrants it. In that event, all other streets should then be blocked at the crossing and detoured along the railroad, if possible, to the nearest grade separation. Under present conditions the railroad does not form a physical barrier between the residential areas to the north and to the south. If it should become necessary to separate the grades at major streets and to close the minor streets, the neighborhoods would be divided and school and other neighborhood functions would be seriously affected.

At present, trains travel very slowly over this line and a flagman runs forward of the train and flags down the highway traffic. While this is a cumbersome and expensive arrangement for railroad operation and is not entirely satisfactory for street safety, present conditions do not justify either the installation of flashing signals or crossing watchmen.

The present grade separation at Tilden Avenue consists of an overhead crossing of the street over the railroad at right angles to the railroad. Inasmuch as the railroad cuts diagonally across the street pattern, the viaduct is askew to the street system and an extremely awkward situation exists for vehicular traffic. The present structure should be replaced by a new viaduct connecting directly to Tilden Avenue at either end. It will probably be necessary to redesign the intersection of Blandina Street and Tilden Avenue to provide access to the viaduct from Blandina Street.

The Bleecker Street underpass is of adequate width for present and future requirements but the presence of center columns in the roadway creates a hazardous condition that should be corrected. In order to eliminate the center columns, the railroad bridge will have to be redesigned and reconstructed. While this improvement will be expensive, it can be justified from the safety standpoint.

Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad

All railroad and highway crossings are at grade, except at Burrstone Road, where the street crosses over the railroad on a steel and concrete viaduct.

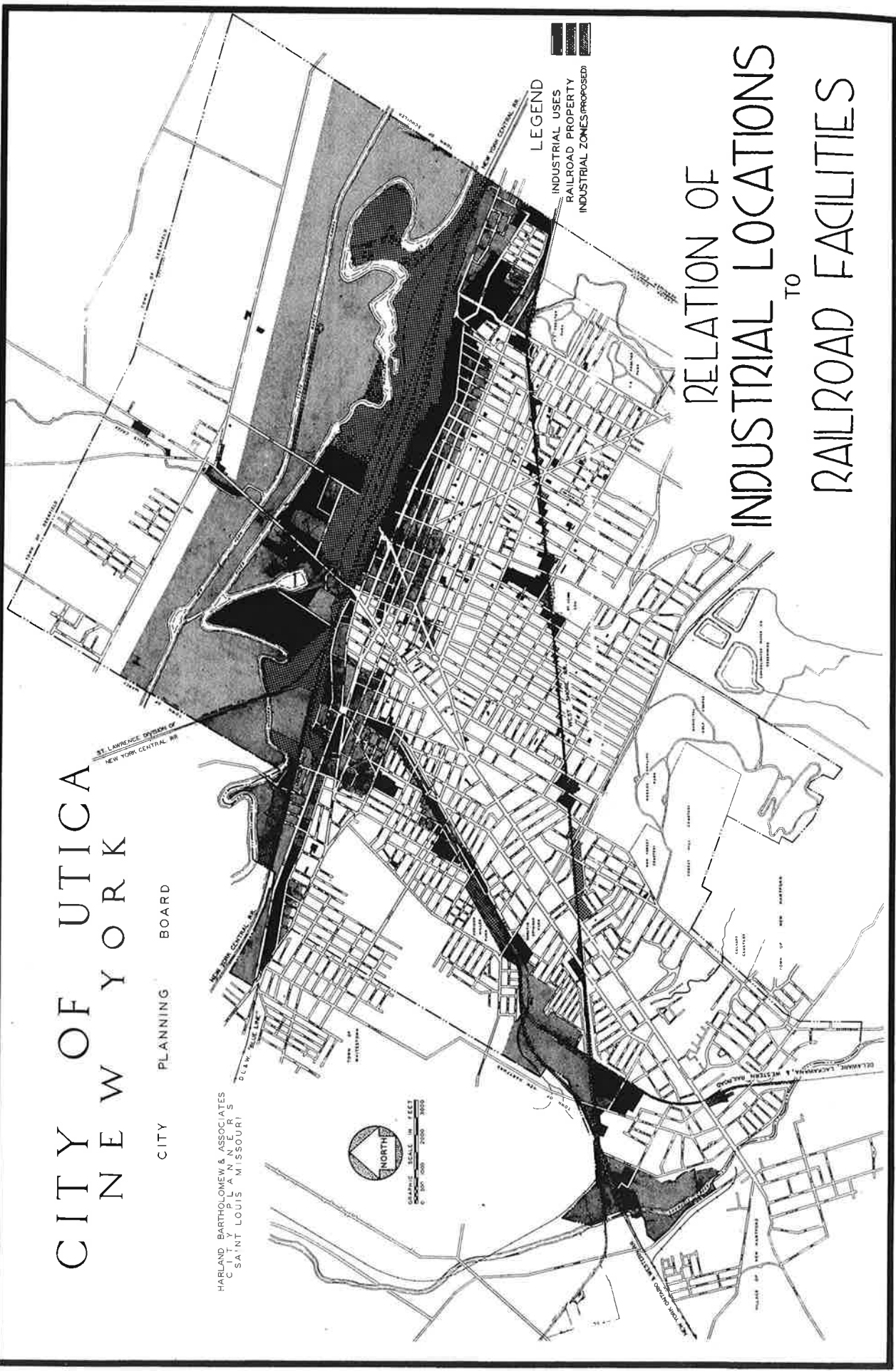
There are only two protected highway crossings. At Thorne Street, flashing light signals have been installed to protect both the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western and the New York, Ontario and Western, which are adjacent to each other at this location. At Genesee Street, crossing gates have been installed.

As in the case of the West Shore Railroad, grade separation structures are not justified by the small amount of traffic on the Railroad. However, flashing light signals should be installed at all of the major street crossings, and should be substituted for the crossing gates now in use at Genesee Street. These installations would permit the free flow of railroad train movements, as well as enhance the safety of the public using the streets.

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RELATION OF INDUSTRIAL LOCATIONS TO RAILROAD FACILITIES

LEGEND
INDUSTRIAL USES
RAILROAD PROPERTY
INDUSTRIAL ZONES (PROPOSED)

NORTH
GRAPHIC SCALE IN FEET
0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000

New York, Ontario and Western Railway

As in the case of the West Shore Railroad, grade separation structures are not warranted by the very small amount of railroad traffic. However, at such time as traffic on the major streets justifies some protection, flashing light signals should be installed to protect the public and permit the uninterrupted movement of railroad trains.

The Union Passenger Station

The Union Passenger Station is located on Main Street, a short distance east of Genesee Street.

This is a through type station and is modern in every respect. It compares favorably with stations recently built. It has a very large waiting room, and all other facilities are ample to provide for peak conditions, and for considerable future increase of railroad travel.

The greatest detriment to efficient operation of the Terminal is the serious deficiency in parking space adjacent to the building. Only a few vehicles can be accommodated on railroad property and the surrounding streets.

Adequate off-street parking space should be provided for railroad patrons and consideration should be given by the New York Central to acquiring the property lying between the Terminal and the Public Park at the corner of Genesee and Main Streets. This property is now occupied by a five-story brick warehouse and a four-story brick hotel, both of which buildings are relatively old and will probably be removed in a few years.

Removal of these buildings would not only provide for badly needed parking space, but would enhance the architectural setting of the building.

Relation of Industrial Location to Railroad Facilities

Plate 51 illustrates the important relationship which exists between railroads and industrial developments in Utica.

The greatest concentration of industries is shown to exist adjacent to the railroad properties on the south side of the Mohawk River. Several small but important industrial centers have developed along the West Shore Railroad and the Broad Street spur of the West Shore serves many large industries.

The Delaware and Lackawanna serves part of the Lincoln Avenue industrial district, and the "Blue Line" along Oriskany Street, West, provides freight service for another group of industries. This railroad also serves the busy Sauquoit Valley manufacturing area south of Utica.

The Ontario and Western Railroad serves the industries of the Lincoln Avenue district and the New Hartford industries adjacent to the spur in that area.

Plate 51 also shows the portions of the city which are included in light or heavy industrial districts in the proposed zoning plan. These proposed industrial zones are directly related both to the existing industrial land uses and to the railroad properties and facilities.

(B) THE NEW YORK STATE BARGE CANAL

The New York State Barge Canal is operated by the State of New York. The local division headquarters are at Utica.

A large harbor is available at Utica for users of this type of transportation. Although a railroad track exists along the end of the harbor, it has no connection with any of the tracks of the railroad companies in the district.

A modern machine shop and office building, about 50' x 220', at the harbor is used primarily for the maintenance of equipment, maintenance of the Canal, and the locks and reservoirs of the division.

At present the local harbor is equipped only for large bulk type freight. The principal freight being handled today is inbound petroleum products in tank barges.

About 300,000 to 400,000 tons of petroleum products are received at Utica per year for delivery to large oil companies with tank farms located on the harbor, on the river and on the canal.

There is no outbound freight movement to the Canal at Utica. No facilities are provided for either inbound or outbound handling of other types of bulk freight, such as heavy machinery, bulk coal or grain or structural steel. No facilities nor equipment are provided for handling and transporting package freight, or less than barge-load commodities.

Proposed Improvements

Until such time as other facilities are provided, and other types of canal transportation businesses are developed, there is not much likelihood of any expansion of the canal business into fields other than that of bulk petroleum products.

The development and expansion of the canal business into transportation of other types of commodities will require considerable study, planning and foresight. It involves the determination of origin, destination and availability of other types of freight; the probable tonnage; possibly some pioneering in the development of new industries or branches of existing

industries; the possibility of the development of transfer of freight from water to rail, or vice versa; a study of other existing water transportation facilities and types of freight handled on the navigable streams throughout the country. Plans for equipping the terminals involved; estimates of costs of terminal improvements and new floating equipment; determination of freight rates and the time schedules for different classes of freight, all are matters which must be given consideration. Before new money is appropriated or invested, actual commitments should be secured.

When once such a plan is developed, considerable increase in barge line traffic can be expected.

No new freight business will be turned over to the Barge Canal until operators are equipped to perform the service. The Barge Canal represents a large expenditure of public funds and should be equipped to perform that service, and develop the freight traffic for which the money was expended and the canal constructed.

Utica should enjoy the benefits of a reduced rate form of transportation. There are many industries moving large volumes of freight to which a reduced freight rate is more important than time in transit. New industries might be attracted to locate at Utica if reduced freight rates were made available by canal transportation.

It is suggested that the City of Utica, together with other large cities along the system of barge canals, jointly petition the State of New York to appoint a committee of transportation experts, and appropriate ample funds for them to make a detailed study, report and recommendations of the possibilities of increased freight transportation on the New York State Barge Canal.

(C) TRUCK TRANSPORTATION

Location of Terminals

There are 16 terminals in Utica and vicinity for licensed truck lines which carry freight between cities. Twelve of the terminals are within Utica's corporate limits, one is east of the city on Broad Street, two are west of the city on the Oriskany Truck Route, and one is in New Hartford.

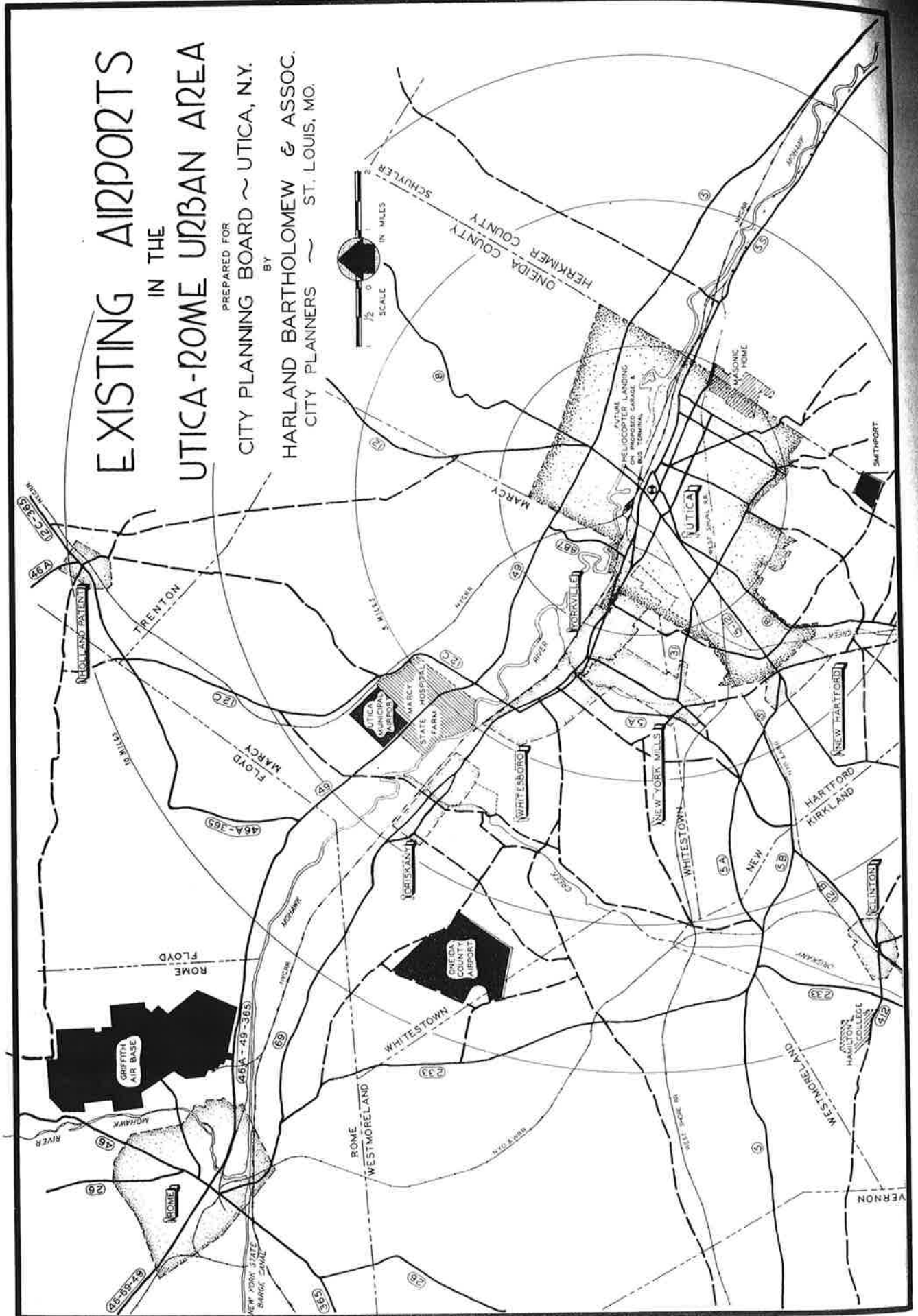
A new Traffic Ordinance, prepared by the Traffic Division of the Bureau of Police was adopted by the Common Council in June, 1949. This ordinance (301) defines heavy trucks as any vehicle weighing five tons or over, and specifies routes of travel through the city for such trucks. These routes are Oriskany Street, East and West; Broad Street, Whitesboro Street between Oriskany and Bagg Square; North Genesee Street; Riverside Drive and Herkimer Road and Trenton Avenue. The only through trucking permitted in Utica south of Oriskany Street is the north-south movement over Oneida and Genesee Streets to North Genesee Street.

This pattern of truck routes as established conforms with the proposed pattern of major streets, and is well related to the location of existing truck terminals. Restriction of through truck movement to these particular streets will aid in restricting future truck terminals to these same streets.

Heavy truck traffic is injurious to residential areas and it frequently causes considerable congestion in the central business district. Heavier pavement is required for large freight trucks than is needed for pleasure cars or light delivery trucks. For these reasons, restriction of truck routes to these designated streets, and consolidation of truck terminals along these streets are important elements of Utica's transportation policy.

EXISTING AIRPORTS IN THE UTICA-ROME URBAN AREA

PREPARED FOR
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BY
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(D) AIRPORTS IN THE UTICA-ROME URBAN AREA

Existing Facilities

Plate 52 shows four airports in Oneida County and the Utica-Rome urban area.

The Utica Municipal Airport is located about seven miles west of the city on River Road (Route 49) in the Town of Marcy. The site, consisting now of 293.7 acres, was acquired and developed twenty years ago. This is a Class 2 airport.

The airport is limited in its possibilities for expansion due to its location between the New York State Barge Canal and Route 49 on the south, Marcy State Hospital on the east, and a sharp rise in elevation on the north.

Due to the site limitations, loss of the municipal hangar by fire, and the scheduled completion of the Oneida County Airport at an early date, arrangements were made in April, 1949 to lease the Utica Municipal Airport to Utica Aircraft, Inc., for a 15-year period. It is now being operated for flight and ground school training, charter, storage and repair services.

Griffiss Air Base at Rome is a 2500-acre military installation. Construction was started in August, 1941 and the base was activated in February, 1942. This has been designated as a permanent military field and commercial and civilian flying is restricted.

Smithport is a small private airport in the Town of New Hartford near the junction of upper Higby Road and Third Avenue Extension. The field is airmarked and has one paved and two sod runways. Airport service provided at Smithport includes primary flying school, charter service, storage and repair.

Oneida County Airport is located midway between Utica and Rome. It will be a Class 4 airport when completed some time next year. Utica, Rome and other communities of Oneida County will then have a modern airport large enough and adequately equipped for large commercial planes.

The area of the entire field is over 1200 acres, of

which 600 acres are being improved for airport facilities and operations. The administration building and two blacktop runways are under construction.

The cost of the new Oneida County Airport is being shared equally by the County and the Federal Government. The County share of the cost is, in turn, being distributed among the 26 towns and two cities in proportion to the assessed valuation of each. Utica's share of the approximate \$1,750,000 total cost is 29.5 per cent; and the city's share of the portion of the cost borne by Oneida County's cities and towns is approximately five hundred thousand dollars.

Proposed Improvements

Utica's great need for modern airport facilities is being fulfilled in the construction of the new Oneida County Airport. The site is only eight or nine miles by airline from Baggs Square. The driving time over existing roads by way of Colemans is estimated to be 18 minutes for normal traffic conditions and 22 minutes during the rush hour. If access is provided at Colemans to the proposed Thruway, a small time saving would result between Utica and the airport.

The economic report prepared by McFarland and Brown, Engineers for the Oneida County Airport, states that "after operations have reached the proportions now seen possible in 10 years, private flying will be relegated to other fields. -- Grass landing fields for practice landings would be required. -- The construction of one or possibly two such fields should be a necessary part of this aviation program as it would develop fields near the city for taxi service, bring the private flyer nearer his take-off point while he is kept to regulated airports where safety regulations are enforced. This combination of circumstances requires the additional facilities of air-park construction for sound aviation policy".

It is suggested that full consideration be given to use of the Municipal Airport as one field in the proposed system of air-parks, and that continuation of city ownership be determined by its potential importance in the system.

Two of some twenty applications for air service in and out of Utica propose to provide scheduled helicopter service. The helicopter is in its infancy and its development cannot be predicted at this time. Utica's long-range plans for community development should recognize the potential growth of this form of air service, and should be sufficiently flexible to make maximum use of it.

It is suggested that the roof deck of the proposed parking garage and union bus terminal adjacent to Hotel Hamilton on Oriskany Street be considered as a landing area for helicopters. This location has several advantages, being part of the union bus station, within the central business district, close to the Union Railroad station, and adjacent to the post office and other public buildings.